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CANADIAN LITERATURE N^o. 6

Autumn, 1960

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DRAWINGS AND DECORATIONS IN THIS ISSUE ARE BY GEORGE KUTHAN AND BEN LIM.

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contributors

MILTON WILSON is Managing Editor of *Canadian Forum*. He has written extensively on poetry in Canadian reviews, and edited the anthology of *Recent Canadian Verse* published by *Queen's Quarterly* last year.

HUGH MACLENNAN gave testimony on behalf of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in the recent court action against the book in Montreal. His most recent volume, *Scotchman's Return and Other Essays*, is reviewed in this issue of *Canadian Literature*.

WILLIAM MCCONNELL, who runs the Klanak Press in Vancouver, has contributed short stories to various journals and has also appeared frequently on the CBC, both as a short story writer and as a commentator on legal questions.

JOAN SELBY is a Librarian at the University of British Columbia and is also Assistant Editor of the *British Columbia Library Quarterly*.

Apart from his many volumes of verse, EARLE BIRNEY is the author of two works of fiction, *Turvey* and *Down the Long Table*. His selected poems are to appear shortly with McClelland & Stewart.

CHESTER DUNCAN, who teaches English at the University of Manitoba, has himself frequently appeared on CBC programmes, both as a critic, particularly of music, and as a pianist.

PHILIP STRATFORD, who is at the University of Western Ontario, has contributed frequent articles on the theatre and on fiction to such periodicals as *Canadian Forum*, *Tamarack Review* and *Queen's Quarterly*.

GERARD BESSETTE is the author of an important critical volume, *Les Images en Poésie Canadienne-Française*, which will be reviewed shortly in *Canadian Literature*.

NORMAN ENDICOTT teaches English at the University of Toronto, and has frequently criticised poetry in Canadian journals.

JOHN BILSLAND has already appeared in *Canadian Literature* as the author of an essay on the poetry of Wilfred Watson.

HONOURS AND AWARDS

UP TO NOW we have refrained from trying the patience of our readers by self-congratulation or by printing the messages of appreciation that have come to us from our friends. For the latter we have been grateful, but we have always wished the contents of our pages to be judged on their own merits and to be presented without garlands.

This time, however, we cannot refrain from breaking our custom to mention an honour which we value greatly. In the annual exhibition of Canadian printing, Typography '60, the first issue of *Canadian Literature* was granted an Award of Distinctive Merit; it was one of fifteen exhibits, out of a total of fifteen hundred entries, to be selected for this honour. This is an occasion for legitimate self-congratulation, but even more for congratulation—in which we hope our readers will join—of the typographer and the printer, whose names appear on our contents page and without whom we would certainly have gone awardless.

Lady Chatterley's Lover is not a piece of Canadian literature. But what happens to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in the Canadian courts may well become part of our literary history. It is for this reason that we publish Hugh MacLennan's spirited defence of that masterpiece, whose treatment, incidentally, gives considerable support to the misgivings we expressed on the new censorship law in the editorial, "Areopagitica Re-Written", which appeared in *Canadian Literature* No. 2.

IN ANOTHER RECENT EDITORIAL we discussed the question of literary awards, and particularly the Governor-General's Awards. At that time we made no reference to the prizes which are periodically presented by certain publishers, both American and Canadian, to writers whose books subsequently appear on their lists. Our neglect was not undeliberate. We were disturbed at the

time by the literary quality of the books which receive such awards; the opinion expressed by one of our reviewers in this issue on a recent prize-winning novel, plus our own reading of another which has been honoured by a different publisher and not yet reviewed in these pages, only reinforces our misgivings.

We do not know on what basis these prizes are granted. Certainly the best of our contemporary writers and novels never seem to receive them, and a look at the books which do succeed makes one suspect that publishers' prizes are in fact given not for literary achievement, but for saleability, that they are aimed at the mass readership of today rather than the discriminating readership of tomorrow. This suspicion may be unjust, but if it is, then the case is even worse, because we have to face the situation in which certain well-known publishers cannot even tell the difference between well and badly written books.

Either way, the result is embarrassing. It is embarrassing for editors and reviewers to feel that they must expose the pretensions of poor novels which publishers have found prizeworthy, instead of allowing them to go unnoticed with the herd. It is embarrassing for readers who wonder if their taste may be at fault when they find nothing worthwhile in a book that has been launched with much ballyhoo. And it *should* be embarrassing to the publishers whose motives, or discrimination, or both, may be called in question by such dubious awards.

Our suggestion is that publishers should abandon all such house prizes granted to books in whose success they themselves have an interest, and leave their publications to take a chance with the rest in competing for the various prizes which are granted by organisations whose interest in the publishing industry extends only to the excellence or otherwise of its productions. If they should still wish to benefit authors, they would surely gain more credit and do more good by establishing funds to be awarded in their names — but not necessarily to authors from whom they profit—by the Governor-General's Awards Board or some similar and wholly independent body of judges.



KLEIN'S DROWNED POET

CANADIAN VARIATIONS ON
AN OLD THEME

Milton Wilson

RAYMOND KNISTER must be the best-known drowned poet in Canadian letters. Writer of pastorals and herald of imagism, cut off at the age of thirty-three and recovered from Lake St. Clair after three days of dragging, he is Canada's ideal portrait of young Lycidas waiting for a pastoral elegy. He still seems to be waiting. Dorothy Livesay describes his last swim in a Memoir, her own poetry is haunted by images of diving and drowning, and she has dedicated a long poem to Knister. But she provides us with no more than elegiac allusions; there is no full-dress elegy,

Following after Shelley
Or wordcarvers I knew
(Bouchette; and Raymond, you).

Even James Reaney, his successor as a Southern Ontario farm-poet, when he introduces Knister as one of the minor geese of *A Suit of Nettles*, allows him no meed of a melodious tear. In the April eclogue Raymond himself may sing of the land's rebirth out of the ice age, and also (by analogy) of the flood, the ark and the released birds, but there is no successor to Reaney's early poem on Lake St. Clair. In October, after Raymond has finished his superb autumn song (which is as appropriate to Canada's biographer of Keats as his spring song was to the author of "Feed"), he simply drops out of *A Suit of Nettles*. All we get in November is a series of four impersonal elegies from four different points of view. When the reader turns the pastoral wheel of the book for a second time, it is his own responsibility if Raymond's first appearance, with spring from the Flood, seems somehow fresher than before.

Maybe for a Canadian poet to be elegized as drowned, he should either not be dead at all, or at least not literally drowned. Such, at any rate, seems to be the

moral of the best recent examples I can think of: John Sutherland's poem on E. J. Pratt, and its successor, Miriam Waddington's elegy on Sutherland. I'm not sure just what moral to draw from George Johnston's Edward (that remote Canadian relative of Edward King), who was drowned and elegized in *The Cruising Auk*, only to reappear as large as life a year or so later in *The Atlantic Monthly*. But Raymond Knister's successful rivals have rarely been Canadian. The usual drowned poet in Canadian poetry is anonymous or international or archetypal—or Shelley.

HE MAKES an unmistakable and substantial appearance in two familiar showpieces of nineteenth-century Canadian poetry: Charles G. D. Roberts' "Ave!" and Duncan Campbell Scott's "The Piper of Arll". Roberts' poem has been called by Desmond Pacey a pastoral elegy, but Roberts thought of it as a nativity ode on the centenary of Shelley's birth. Still, by calling it a pastoral elegy, Pacey quite properly draws our attention to the crucial importance of the drowned poet in "Ave!", and no one could fail to observe how the melancholy of "The Scholar Gypsy" and "Thyrsis" tends to qualify the essential vigour of its tone. It would be presumptuous to retitl the poem "Hail or Farewell", but I would be quite happy to leave out the exclamation mark. Scott's "The Piper of Arll", on the other hand, is a sort of Pre-Raphaelite lyrical ballad, whose piper (poet, singer, artist, what you will, Scott was never one to separate the arts) sinks with his complete retinue: audience, palace of art, and all. The tone may be elegiac, but the poem's cycle is closed; in the end there is nothing to be mourned and no one left to mourn.

"Ave!" has often been praised—for its parts. The overwrought brilliance, the verbal inventiveness and ingenuity, the sheer excess of the whole thing, are remarkable and exhausting, whatever you finally think of it all. The usual complaint is that Roberts has failed to tie the piece together. The Bay of Fundy setting with which it begins and ends fails to connect with the scenes from Shelley's life (Sussex, Rome, the Bay of Spezzia, and so on) which dominate the middle of the poem. This complaint mistakes the central problem of "Ave!" for its chief fault. Shelley is a poet who binds English poetry to its classical and Mediterranean heritage; in "Ave!" he takes a further, posthumous step and becomes the intermediary who binds Roberts' work as a Canadian and Maritime poet to both its

romantic and its classical past. "Therefore with no far flight . . . to thee I turn," says Roberts in Stanza XI, as he turns from the Tantramar region to Sussex and Italy. Whatever meaning he can give to that "therefore" is the centre of his poem, the real justification for hailing Shelley's birth among the meadows and marshes of New Brunswick.

"The awful shadow of some unseen Power" which fell on Shelley in Sussex falls on Roberts in New Brunswick and is "strangely akin" to Shelley himself. In the first ten stanzas Roberts tries to paint the lost landscape of his childhood in terms of such kinship. His youthful companionship with the racing elements obviously echoes the "Ode to the West Wind", the star images which dot the poem from first stanza to last come (especially) from *Adonais*, and the "wide marshes ever washed in clearest air" have unexpected moments of kinship with the Mediterranean of *Epipsychidion*; the tide ebbing and flowing in the "long reaches" with "perpetual unrest" is explicitly made a symbol of Shelley's mind, just as the tumult of the flood is compared to the strife at the centre of "the great calm of his celestial art". And of course the nationalist of 1893 welcomes the poet of "Desire and Liberty". If there is any doubt about the extent of Roberts' literary allusions in "Ave!", there is certainly no doubt that he feels himself submerged in the Tantramar like Shelley in the Bay of Spezia, so that from the thought of his own body, in whose veins "forever must abide / The urge and fluctuation of the tide", he can later turn easily to the moment when Shelley's body emerges from the sea and contemplates its own funeral pyre on the beach:

Back from the underworld of whelming change
To the wide-glittering beach thy body came;
And thou didst contemplate with wonder strange
And curious regard thy kindred flame . . .

Roberts had fully prepared the way even for this last phrase by calling the Tantramar "untamable and changeable as flame".

After the lines on Shelley's apocalyptic funeral pyre, where the drowned body becomes a "heart of fire, that fire might not consume", Roberts suddenly turns back to Shelley's strange kinsman. In perfect sympathy, the "wizard flood" of Tantramar is now at the full and includes within itself everything from "every tribute stream and brimming creek". Roberts chooses this climactic moment to give the "sovereign vasts" their full personification. Tantramar

Ponders, possessor of the utmost god,
With no more left to seek.

But (unfortunately) the poem cannot end here. Shelley's fulfilment may be out of time, but the wizard flood's is not, and anyway Roberts preferred to have something left to seek. The burning bush of Shelley's heart must be reduced to just one more scarlet dawn. With the tide waning, and with "Dover Beach", "Sohrab and Rustum" and "The Scholar Gypsy" looming ominously at the back of his mind, Roberts decides on an Arnoldian conclusion by epic simile. The flood pondering its "utmost good" is compared to an embattled "lord of men" who has reached his "supreme estate" and now "ponders the scrolled heaven" from a solitary tower at night. He reads the signs of his fortune's ebb and, as the stars recede (like the tide), he descends to new war, while "scarlet dawns afar". As usual, Roberts has given us too much. After the rapid succession of radical images—drowned and burning poet, all-inclusive river-god, towered mage, embattled lord of men—we have little inclination left to guess that what the Tantramara, risen out of a watery bed, sees from its lofty place of vantage may be yet another of Roberts' visions of Canada's promised land.

SCOTT'S SUBMERGED POET suffers from no such anticlimax or crowding off the stage, and is the protagonist of a far less pretentious poem. But, simple as it may be, "The Piper of Arll" is the sort of work at which critics prefer to throw a wreath of their favourite adjectives ("haunting", "delicate", "musical" and the like) and then lapse into silence. Its simplicity disarms and entrances, like the legendary gaze of a rattlesnake. Only Ralph Gustafson seems to have found his tongue long enough to call it "a ballad of the fatal possession by the world of the beauty which longs to be one with it." The phrase is apt. But this fatal possession works both ways: when the ship finally takes the siren-piper on board, the new freight sinks it; yet the piper is already dead, and the siren-ship has killed him. Their mutual possession kills them both.

Any such "allegorical" description is far less simple than the poem itself. More than any other Canadian poem I can recall, "The Piper of Arll" seems to be that much-discussed (but rarely seen) thing, a work entirely self-contained, literally about itself: a part-song about part-singing. In it (and a very few others, like "In a Country Churchyard") Scott escapes from the peevish nostalgia and spasmodic violence which are the personal sediment in his work as a whole. No doubt if we looked hard enough we might find "The Piper of Arll" resting in the limbo between Shalott and Camelot, which is where all good Victorian poems go

when they die. But the less said about the problem of the "responsibility of the artist" the better.

The setting, the characters and the action are what matters, and, of course, the music they compose, which is pretty schematic. To begin with, there's a pastoral cove in sympathy with the "heart of the ocean" and a hill with three pines which, in the flaring sunset, look like warriors coming home with plunder from a burning town. But water and hill are not kept apart; they even manage to encircle one another, for

A brook hung sparkling on the hill,
The hill swept far to ring the bay.

From cove and hill the poem goes on to introduce the actors: a piper (faithful, like the cove, to the "springs of God's ocean") and a ship (arrayed, like the hill, in the colours of the sunset). The ship's "pennon bickered red as blood" and, while the hills listen, the sailors sing for their lost home. The piper responds with "a tranquil melody / Of lonely love and hoped-for death". The crew's next tune is more sinister than the first: it mixes with the brook and stirs the "braird" on the hill. When these musical messages have finished signaling back and forth between piper and sea and ship and hill, the piper goes to sleep on the beach and the sailors around the mast. It's a full close.

So much for the slow introduction and the exposition of the main tunes. I take it, by the way, that no literary critic's musical analogies (like his Freudian ones) can ever be discreet enough, and I don't want to discuss the poetic equivalent of sonata form. But Belle Botsford, the professional violinist whom Scott married a year or two before he wrote "The Piper of Arll", would have found it an appropriate wedding present, even if she couldn't play it in public. In its own way it recalls the two most famous epithalamia in English, Spenser's and "The Ancient Mariner". Anyway, with the exposition over, the action begins. When the ship leaves at dawn, the piper awakes to despair. His lips violate his thought, and he actually breaks into speech. He casts down his mantle and, if he doesn't drown his book, he at least throws his pipe in the water. We are watching a kind of thematic metamorphosis. Then, when his frenzy has subsided, he picks up his broken pipe from the eddy and repairs it. Now the antiphonal method of the previous night miraculously turns into counterpoint, or as close to it as a single voice can get.

Again he tried its varied stops;
The closures answered right and true,
And starting out in piercing drops

A melody began to drip
That mingled with a ghostly thrill
The vision-spirit of the ship,
The secret of his broken will.

As he continues to pipe this mingled measure on his new-found instrument, everything seems to come together for an immortal unison. "He was his soul and what he played", his will joins the world's will, the depth of song is at the heart of nature, artifice and unconsciousness are one. The piper has now sung his soul out and from this point on is forever still.

There is a pause and the music revives, but from the opposite direction. The ship approaches at sundown and sends a boat ashore, its sailors singing not their first nostalgic hymn, or even their second alien song, but the piper's original lonely tune, now with its "rhythm throbbing every throat". The boat picks up the piper's body and the sailors row back. Their voices are silent, and all we hear is the elegiac accompaniment (water music and fireworks music), with just an echo of the ghostly drops of the piper's last, immortal tune.

Silent they rowed him, dip and drip,
The oars beat out an exequy,
They laid him down within the ship,
They loosed a rocket to the sky.

But there is no full recapitulation of themes, just a slow dying fall. The coda is absolute silence. In the last twelve stanzas, the reader and the poem are all eyes and no ears. Nothing in "The Piper of Arll" is better than the way Scott works this last sea-change, as the ship sinks to the bottom.

They saw the salt plain spark and shine,
They threw their faces to the sky;
Beneath a deepening film of brine
They saw the star-flash blur and die.

Transfixed in their upward gaze, piper and crew are "empearled" in the heart of the sea, whose watery glow transmutes their eyes into one precious stone after another, from "ruby in the green / Long shaft of sun that spreads and rays" to "starry pits of gold" in the evening. But the last metamorphosis we see is the ship's: solid gem and tree of life in one, "the lost prince of a diadem".

A good many mythical skeletons lie below the surface of "The Piper of Arll". I have tried to imply most of them, without applying any of them, not even Eden and all that; nor have I thought that the many allusions to Shakespeare, Coleridge and others needed underlining. Both "Ave!" and "The Piper of Arll" exemplify in our post-Confederation poets what A. J. M. Smith has called their "belief in

the continuity of culture." But each is a pretty hard-won *tour de force*, and neither can be regarded as a stage in the continuity of Canadian poetry. In our poetry the next stage was anticlimax, and, whatever the various poets may have thought at the time, their work in the last two decades of the century now looks like an anthology without a history.

From a wide enough perspective, English-Canadian poetry still looks like that. The hundred-year landscape before 1918 is dotted with half a dozen nature sonnets, a few ghostly lyrics of the Canada goose-pimple school, a trace of pioneer or Indian nature myth (if you look hard for it) and a few longer poems that are either interesting because they purport to be distinctively Canadian or good because they so obviously are nothing of the kind. Even between the World Wars what emerges is two poets who are more like the poles of Canadian poetry than stages in its history: E. J. Pratt, chronicler of epic, clashes on the frontier between natural, human and divine; and A. M. Klein, ornate master of many traditions, at the crossroads of Jewish—and French-Canadian culture. The chances of writing good poetry for such an anthology are no doubt better than they seem. An ancestry of stray sports and withered shoots is at least uninhibiting. Since for the English-Canadian poet the background of English and American poetry is just an unearned windfall, he can discard or adopt it with a kind of timeless detachment. He isn't reduced to tacking on a piece or two; he can rework or subvert the whole design. Since the body isn't *his* dead past, it can be buried without ceremony; it can even start to look like a living present. If the poet happens to be Irving Layton, it may even do both at once.

But also if he happens to be Charles G. D. Roberts. In our anthology the nineties and the fifties refuse to be separated by history, despite the surface shifts in diction and imagery, despite the poetic wars and rumours of wars. "Ave!" and "The Piper of Arll" make themselves at home without much ado, let us say right next to *Europe* and *The Boatman*.

TO CALL KLEIN AND PRATT the poles of Canadian poetry is to suggest something in common as well as a world that holds them apart. Their diction often calls for the same critical adjectives: polysyllabic, technical, erudite, as well as colloquial or prosaic. Before 1940 even their versification might have seemed equally traditional: sometimes neat and sometimes expansive, but never

intricate or explosive. The discontinuous narrative forms which start with *The Witches' Brew* and end with *Toward the Last Spike* are the natural companions of the lyrical mosaics of *Hath Not a Jew*. They are both poets of "the beleaguered group". And no doubt in the end Pratt's "apocalyptic dinner" and Klein's "goodly eating / Of roast leviathan" come to the same thing. But, in the meantime, no reader could possibly confuse their wordplay or their quatrains and couplets, not to mention the immediate substance of things seen and hoped for. And to turn from Pratt's pre-war poems to Klein's is suddenly to leave the sea far behind, almost to forget that it ever existed. *Hath Not a Jew* must be the driest book in Canadian poetry. Whatever the swings of the pendulum between Egypt and Promised Land, the poet never gets his feet wet.

In this as in many other ways, Klein's last book of poetry, *The Rocking Chair and Other Poems*, differs from his first. The obvious differences—a new and explicit French-Canadian setting, fresh winds of style blowing through Montreal in the forties—are not necessarily the most valuable. We have been told that the influence of the Preview and First Statement groups in wartime Montreal served to release Klein, that it allowed him to move from the dead end of *Poems 1944* and the misstep of the *Hitleriad* to the new vitality of his fourth book. But this somewhat factitious shot in the arm had its disadvantages. More poems than "The Provinces" try to compete with Patrick Anderson, and "Les Filles Majeures" is the sort of thing that P. K. Page did much better. The value of the new setting is equally ambiguous. "The Rocking Chair", "The Snowshoers", "The Spinning Wheel" and other poems of the kind are brilliant but very detached; quaint genre-pieces by a contemporary and more elaborate Krieghoff. Klein's eye and ear are more alert than ever, and the book is full of superb exercises; but, although the places and people of Quebec (and occasionally other provinces) are painted in more detail than the towns and sundry folk of *Hath Not a Jew*, they are grasped with less force and concern. In other words, Klein's new regionalism is as much an inhibition as a release.

The richest and probably the best are those poems where Klein's first world seems to interpenetrate his second. He has never written anything lovelier or stronger than "Grain Elevator", beside which (as gloss perhaps) I like to place the best stanza of "Bread":

O black-bread hemisphere, oblong of rye,
Crescent and circle of the seeded bun,
All art is built on your geometry,
All science explosive from your captured sun.

Or maybe the best companion poem might be "Quebec Liquor Commission Store". The book is full of such interesting constructions and parodies of constructions: the anti-ark of "Pawnshop", the sound-proof jungle of "Commercial Bank", the "grassy ghetto" of "Indian Reservation", and even "Frigidaire", which compresses within its "slow sensational and secret sight" a whole Laurentian winter pastoral. The interpenetration of worlds and images is sometimes more than a little startling. Anyone who turns from Klein's novel, *The Second Scroll*, back to "Political Meeting" will greet the line "a country uncle with sunflower seeds in his pockets" with a shock of recognition, and for one awful moment see the shadow of Uncle Melech rising up behind the Camillien Houde who is his parody.

The book ends "at the bottom of the sea", but it has gone under water a few times before that. There's a lone bather who seems to be merman, dolphin, water-lily and charioted Neptune all together, although his sea is only a tiled swimming pool. Another poem ends with the rising "from their iced tomb" at break-up time of

the pyramided fish, the unloekered ships,
and last year's blue and bloated suicides.

But no catalogue of "immersion images" would prepare anyone for Klein's Lycidas when he finally appears at the beginning of "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape", an Orpheus dismembered into Bartlett's Quotations, buried on the library shore, unwept even by our brief custodians of fame.

Not an editorial writer, bereaved with bartlett,
mourns him, the shelved Lycidas.
No actress squeezes a glycerine tear for him.

And that beginning hardly prepares us for his last appearance at the end of the poem, crowned and shining (however equivocally) at the bottom of the sea, another "lost prince of a diadem".

Klein gives us a good many alternative portraits to examine on our way to the true one. First we must travel down the usual elegiac *cul-de-sac* and test the glory and the nothing of a name. But fame's spur has never seemed so blunt; and the series of unholy names (dots, votes, statistics) manage to suggest nothing less than a grim parody of the original creative spirit, the blasphemy of a nameless god:

O, he who unrolled our culture from its scroll . . .
who under one name made articulate
heaven, and under another the seven-circled air,
is, if he is at all, a number, an x,
a Mr. Smith in a hotel register.

What John Crowe Ransom once claimed for Milton's elegy ("a poem nearly anonymous") Klein is claiming for *Lycidas* himself.

From the poet as name, Klein's portrait-album turns to the poet as others see him, and, at greater length, as he sees himself—falling and rising "just like" a poet. His self-images range from "his mother's miscarriage" at the nadir to "the Count of Monte Cristo come for his revenges" at the zenith, or (to reverse the cycle) from an adolescent first exploring the body of the word to a "convict on parole" (Klein's puns are inescapable). Then he and his kind are portrayed as social beings, scattered about the country, cherishing their esoteric art, joining a political party, seeking and repelling love, multiplying within, alone and not alone. The next portrait strikes deep into Klein: the poet as citizen *manqué*, exile on a reservation. As if he were literally disinherited, cuckolded, displaced by someone else, this poet tries to guess his double outside the poetic ghetto, the man who has come forward to fill "the shivering vacuums his absence leaves". Then the album returns to fame in another form: the public personality the poet dreams of, which "has its attractions, but is not the thing".

Indeed, none of these portraits has much to do with the poet as writer of poetry, although they may be a clue to some "stark infelicity" at the bottom of the poetic process. The last portrait, superimposed on the rest in the sixth and last section of the poem, is another matter. This poet, seeding his illusions, is Adam the namer and praiser and prophet in one. He takes a green inventory, he psalms the world into existence, and then, from a planet of vantage, he takes "a single camera view" of the earth, "its total scope and each afflated tick"—world enough and time rolled in a book, or (if one remembers the first section) scroll. By this means, the drowned poet breathes and pulsates. Each item he praises is "air to his lungs and pressured blood to his heart" and when the list is complete he has resurrected his own drowned body as well as the world's. Or, if this seems too lofty a way of putting it, the next stanza speaks more simply of renewing the craft of verse, of bringing new forms and creeds to life, and thereby of paying back some of the air that is daily being stolen from his lung.

These are not mean ambitions. It is already something
merely to entertain them. Meanwhile, he
makes of his status as zero a rich garland,
a halo of his anonymity,
and lives alone, and in his secret shines
like phosphorus. At the bottom of the sea.

The phrasing of the last two stanzas is extremely tentative; the garland and halo of heavenly fame share their brightness with the death-blue shine of the

corpse; and Lycidas remains waiting "meanwhile". The ending will seem even more negative and ironic if we contrast it with the psalm-followed "drowning instant" at the end of Uncle Melech's liturgy, the last gloss of *The Second Scroll*. Of course, between the poet's multiple-portrait and Uncle Melech's composite photograph lies the establishment of Israel in 1949. But Klein's poem is still fundamentally affirmative. The poet is nobody, a mere cipher; but the zero is also the halo over his drowned head: zero as hero, or "Aught from Naught", as Uncle Melech would have put it. And, although his status as nobody may be his "stark infelicity", it may also be the poet's extinction of personality, the ultimate anonymity behind the ultimate poem. As if to emphasize the affirmative, Klein changed his title from "Portrait of the Poet as Zero" to "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" and thereby gave his favourite "microcosm-macrocosm" image pride of place.

Some of the details of the poem (the maps and charts, the images of exploration, the drowned body itself) in combination make it seem likely that Klein was remembering one of Donne's best-known hymns. But a reader of Canadian poetry might well be reminded of Klein's own early masterpiece "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens". What comes out of Spinoza's lens, as it magnifies one way and shrinks another, is a figure for God's relation to man and nature. Between microcosm and macrocosm stands God, the imminent lens or eye, the focus and burning glass of all creation. Klein's Spinoza translates this figure into theorem and into pantheistic psalm.

I behold thee in all things, and in all things: lo, it is myself; I look into the pupil of thine eye, it is my very countenance I see

The flowers of the field, they are kith and kin to me; the lily my sister, the rose is my blood and flesh

Even as the stars in the firmament move, so does my inward heart, and even as the moon draws the tides in the bay, so does it the blood in my veins

Howbeit, even in dust I am resurrected; and even in decay I live again.

Spinoza can reach a similar conclusion through Klein's alchemical or Cabbalistic images: cirque, skull, crucible, golden bowl, hourglass, planet, "macrocosm, sinew-shut". The "horrible atheist" proves "that in the crown of God we are all gems". The title of this early poem might just as well be "Portrait of Spinoza as Landscape". One might even justify calling the later one "Portrait of the Poet as Lens". Its poet portrait is also a poet-photographer. At first we are only told of "mirroring lenses forgotten on a brow / that shine with the guilt of their unnoticed world". But the last picture to be developed under water is that "single-camera view": man, world, and maybe burning glass, all at once.

I DOUBT if Irving Layton will ever improve on these binoculars. Nevertheless, more than one of his poems reads like a redevelopment of Klein's "Portrait". Layton belongs among those not uncommon poets who grow by discovering with surprise, delight and horror what their previous poems really meant and then writing new ones to prove it. The process can go on forever, as the images and themes renew themselves in poem after poem. At the beginning of one such series stands "The Swimmer", the poem which Layton placed first in his collected edition, *A Red Carpet for the Sun*, and which he has described in public as the poem that first persuaded him he was a poet. It has a lot to answer for if it turned this narcissus into a trumpet daffodil.

Layton has a good many favourite images for the poetic character. Some of his best poems try to fit them together. In "The Cold Green Element", although the drowned poet is the Alpha and Omega of them, a number of others are crushed between the two. The poem begins with the speaker in ignorance of what the air and its green satellite have in store for him, but Layton is at least willing to confront the undertaker with a vision of a drowned poet blown out of the western sea. He is blown out, however, only to become one of his *alter egos*, the hanged poet:

a great squall in the Pacific blew a dead poet
out of the water,
who now hangs from the city's gates.

From hanged poet he becomes lightning-blasted tree (Layton's vegetable world is usually more crucified than crucifying), a haloed and garlanded hunchback, a reflection in the eyes of the castrating female, sun-bloody catalpa leaves—a long list of "murdered selves" ripe for devouring, whose revival is hard to distinguish from a new murder, the fruit from the spent seed. Even the singing worm and crying boys to which the furies clear a path in the last stanza are presented as transitory and misleading; but from them the series of parallel portraits turns back to the beginning, as the poet (or some fishy ancestor) again swims "breathless" in "that cold green element".

As a rule, Layton's poet appears to us in two main settings: one is golden and bloody, but also blotched and blackened with shadow; the other is a cold green element, fertile or snotty, refreshing or suffocating, depending on which side up. "Whatever Else Poetry is Freedom" (another set of poet-portraits) ends with the poetic stave of an "aggrieved king" piercing the heart of the vampire shadow of the sun; his song of lust is an explosive resurrection of the body ("skin and glycer-

ine"); his stave is ultimately the staff of life, like Klein's bread and its captured sun. But earlier in the poem the poet-king is King Canute bidding the waves withdraw and greeting their inexorable approach with a clown's jest. The jest is no protection against the water-logged lung and equivocal halo of Klein's poet.

It was the mist. It lies inside one like a destiny.
A real Jonah it lies rotting like a lung.
And I know myself undone who am a clown
And wear a wreath of mist for a crown.

If there were any answer to that tubercular Jonah in the poet's belly, any link between Layton's golden and airy world and his cold green element, any metamorphic lung at the centre of things, the obvious image for it would be the frog or toad with which Layton has found such unexpected affinities of late. It first appears in "*The Poetic Process*" of 1955. But its real home is Layton's 1958 collection, *A Laughter in the Mind*, as the cover of the first edition makes clear. In one poem the poet identifies himself with "a huge toad I saw, entire but dead, / That Time mordantly had blacked"; in another a "frog sits / And stares at my writing hand" and he imagines it transformed before his eyes to "a royal maniac raving, / Whirlwind's tongue, desolation's lung"; this frog-prince legend also forms the climax of a more recent poem, "Because My Calling Is Such". Most successful of all is "Cain", where the frog (killed by the poet with an air-rifle) combines with a whole group of Layton's most obsessive themes: man as a murdering animal; the levelling of the chain of being; the brotherhood and even identity of murderer and victim, poet and enemy. In a whimsical aside, the death of the gasping frog is even compared to the fall of empires, including the Roman. If this aside heralds the next step in the history of the drowned poet, we can expect amphibious and internecine warfare on a large scale. But, of course, Canadian poetry has had all that before. And, if the finality of Layton's introduction to *A Red Carpet for the Sun* really means anything, I doubt if he plans to give us a succession of lyrical footnotes to *The Great Feud*.

THE DEFENCE OF LADY CHATTERLEY

Hugh MacLennan

UNTIL RECENTLY our Canadian sex hunters have been more modest than their American brothers: they have seldom dared attack a major writer. Usually their prey has been some young American whose adolescent musings on sex have been over-sold to the public by pictures and blurbs on the jacket in which they appear. These books were defended for one reason only. Sex hunters must not be allowed without opposition to establish the claim that the final judge of literature be the local constable or a fourteen-year-old girl.

The attack on *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in a Montreal court was very different, and to join in the defence of *Lady Chatterley* seemed to me both a duty and an honour. A variety of circumstances made this the most important book trial ever held in Canada.

The first of these was the stature of the author under attack: not even the prosecution tried to argue that Lawrence was not an important writer. Another circumstance was the conduct of the publishers. At no time during their sales campaign did they resort to the usual tactics of some paper back salesmen. There were no pictures of half-dressed women on the jacket, no barker's blurbs aimed at the rubes. Finally, this was the first book trial under the new law which was intended to be more liberal than the old one based on the absurd Hicklin judgment of the mid-Victorian era.

Under the new law, "obscenity" is not limited to sex, nor can an entire book be judged on the basis of an isolated passage read aloud in court by a policeman or the prosecutor. Books which "unduly exploit" violence or sadism may also come under the ban of this new law.

Clearly this is an advance in legislation, and it seemed to all of us concerned with the defence of *Lady Chatterley* that it was essential to do what we could to facilitate the court in arriving at a decision which would set a sound precedent.

Of necessity, the law is somewhat vague. In the phrase "undue exploitation", both words are open to subjective interpretation. Yet on the whole the law seems well-intended and sound decisions could go a long way toward making it an excellent one.

Speaking personally, I have no patience with some liberals who say there should be no legal control whatever over the printed word. Having spent some time in Germany before 1933, I saw what monstrous damage can be done by men who incite to racial hatred but dodge the libel laws by not naming specific individuals. This new Canadian law should provide decent people with a weapon against that sort of thing. It should also make it possible to control or limit the diet of crime, cruelty and violence fed into the audiences by some television shows. I could have wished that the first trial under the new law had been concerned with something of this sort, and not with the old sexual boggy. However, since sex was again the target, it was best that Lawrence was involved, and not some obscure writer of no worth.

For Lawrence, especially in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, was essentially a moral writer, a fact the prosecution did not seem able to comprehend because it was inconceivable to them that any moral person should use sexual scenes to convey his message and employ the kind of four-letter words they naturally (in the kind of society Lawrence condemns) had only seen in print on lavatory walls. Least of all could they understand that Lawrence believed that the use of these four-letter words was essential to the moral theory he sought to advance, or that he was using them in the interest of his own genuine purity. This point came up frequently in the defence, but it was ignored in the judgment, or dismissed as the personal opinion of the witnesses.

This point must be made again and again: *Lady Chatterley* is a moral work or it is nothing. It is so moral that in places it pleads the moral issues at the expense of art. I believe that several of the passages containing four-letter words defeat Lawrence's purpose; they seem unreal in the context, as though Lawrence himself, not Mellors, were using them to emphasize his principle that physical love is pure so long as all physical functions of the body are spoken of without shame. Yet this artistic defect, if it is one, happens to be one more proof of Lawrence's moral intention, and it should weigh heavily in his favour in a law court.

Consider it, for example, in the connotation of the clause "undue exploitation of sex." Though the word "exploitation" is not defined here, I don't see what else it can mean but the exploitation of sex for commercial purposes. Such exploitation is very common today, especially in the American market, and it would be naive

to pretend does not bolster sales among a public whose attitude toward sex is still infantile. It has certainly increased the American sale of the current edition of *Lady Chatterley* itself, because the book was persecuted so long that thousands of morons and odd-balls bought it in the hope of finding pornography in it. Most of them were disappointed, for whatever else *Lady Chatterley* may be, it is not prurient.

However, when Lawrence was still alive, it is a proved fact that the use of the four-letter words actually prevented him from obtaining a legitimate market for the novel. His publishers begged him to remove them, or to tone them down by using the Latinized equivalents, and refused to publish the novel unless he did so. Lawrence's assertion that this would emasculate his book and render it dishonest is therefore a *prima facie* proof that he, so far from exploiting sex for commercial purposes, actually ruined the commercial prospects of the novel by writing it as he did. A further proof is the novel's history: the present edition is the first one to be offered across the counter to an English-speaking public since Lawrence's death thirty years ago.

ONCE IT IS RECOGNIZED that *Lady Chatterley* is a moral book—a book sincerely written by a law-abiding man advocating a new attitude toward social and sexual morality—it follows that the principle at stake in a law case involving *Lady Chatterley* is essentially different from the customary one in the trials of "sex books." Essentially, this was a novel of ideas, or at least a modern allegory akin to *Pilgrim's Progress*. The conventional will be shocked by such a comparison, but they need not be if they trouble themselves to discover the gospel Lawrence preached. It was merely this: that sex is the source and core of our existence; that much of our unhappiness, and most of our aggressions, are caused by our refusal or incapacity to understand the nature of sex in love, and to come to terms with it.

According to Lawrence, our attitude toward sex should be the same as our attitude toward life. Life is good in itself; so is physical sex. But neither life nor sex are unqualifiedly good. Both may be rendered evil by false attitudes, false shames, wrong use, degradation, decadence or exploitation for commercial or social purposes. To dissipate your life is manifestly evil; to dissipate your sexual powers in futile promiscuity is equally so. To subjugate your life to the crushing

force of abstractions, to gear it to the impersonality of a machine age—this is evil according to Lawrence. And akin to this is the modern practice of reducing sex to a matter of experimentation, of intellectualizing it, of dissecting the emotions connected with it by artificial language.

It should be obvious to anyone that if Lawrence had set forth his gospel in the kind of language I have used here, nobody would have censored him. This language is far too abstract to influence anyone. But in the allegory of *Lady Chatterley* all the ideas involved with this highly personal subject were translated into flesh and blood, were given the power of poetry and drama, were brought to life in such a way that readers were not merely dealing with abstractions, but with living persons who might have been themselves. Only in this way, so Lawrence insisted, could his morality achieve sufficient power to influence mankind.

Therefore it follows that it is obtuse to confine an indictment of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* to the kind of evidence used against the books which are occasionally haled before the courts and treated like prostitutes. If this novel is a moral allegory—and it clearly is—then those who would deny it an audience are in the position of denying allegiance to the great principle stated by Milton in *Areopagitica*: "Let truth and falsehood grapple: who ever knew truth to be worsted in a free and open encounter?"

Stripped of the many irrelevancies with which the thoughtless have always invested D. H. Lawrence, this is the sole issue which ought to count when Lawrence is impeached in a law court. It might be re-phrased a little as follows: "Is a man to be denied the right to advance a moral philosophy simply because his philosophy is involved with sex?"

And this brings me, as it has brought many other men who have thought about Lawrence's history, to the underlying forces which invariably operate against him. When his attackers insist that they hate Lawrence for what they believe is his prurience or dirtiness, I simply do not believe them. The society in which they live has no objection to prurience. It is riddled with it. The kind of people who prosecute Lawrence never prosecute the cosmetic ads, the movie come-ons, the sexy pictures on the magazine covers. Many a city in America has tolerated the strip tease and the burlesque during the thirty year period when *Lady Chatterley* was under the ban. No, it is not the so-called dirtiness of Lawrence that troubles them; it is the challenge of his morality, and (probably unconsciously) they use the so-called dirtiness as an excuse to thrust aside the moral challenge.

About the targets of this challenge there can be no doubt whatever. The ethic of Lawrence is the direct opposite of the one which permeates our whole material-

istic society, whether it be capitalist or communist. The chief purpose of that society, so far as concerns the daily lives of its members, is to produce, distribute and consume, to break records, to double and re-double the external organization for the purposes of power, production and consumption. In such a society human individualism is not only dangerous, it is a fifth column. So is the human spirit, which must take a secondary place to the demands of the IBM machine and the assembly line. The Laurentian hero is the inevitable antagonist of the Organization Man, and this Lawrence himself knew when he insisted that materialism had driven underground the primeval forces of the blood.

BUT THE ACCUSERS of Lawrence seldom think of this consciously. When they think consciously about the moral issues involved, invariably they fall back upon an ethic more venerable than that of Adam Smith, Karl Marx or Henry Ford. This was the ethic of the Christian Fathers of the third and fourth century, as I believe Morley Callaghan recently pointed out in a magazine article. As so few people these days remember the old theology on which their churches were founded, it may be worth repeating what some of its premises were.

The basic premise of St. Augustine was that life is evil because man is a fallen creature, and in this belief Augustine was of course a true disciple of St. Paul. But he went far beyond St. Paul in his denunciation of sex. If life is evil, then the sexual act must be the most evil act a human being can commit because it perpetuates life. What Augustine elevated into a cornerstone of Christian ethics, Calvin and Knox many centuries later translated into the everyday lives and institutions of their puritan followers.

What private griefs were Calvin's I know not, but Augustine has told us lucidly what his were. "Make me chaste, O God, but not yet," this singular African used to pray when he was young. He had every reason to loathe both life and sex. He passed his days in one of the most miserable and apocalyptic periods of human history and he lived for 76 years. He was a young man when Valens fell at Adrianople and the barbarians breached the Roman frontiers. He was 57 when Alaric sacked Rome, and he met his death when the Vandals besieged Hippo. He was learned, he was intelligent, he certainly understood enough about external cause and effect to attribute the Roman catastrophes to the decadence of Roman institutions. In few of their habits were the Romans of the decline more decadent

than in their use of sex, as Augustine knew from a long personal experience. Most of the patricians were bi-sexual. They played with girls and boys for thrills, and long before the Americans thought of it, they loved the strip-tease. What wonder, then, that Augustine should consider that sex was the prime evil in a society which had become like a human body dying of diseases incurred by its own vices? What wonder that he, being a genius of colossal force, should have been able to give to his personal hatred and fear of sex the force of a primitive taboo?

There are few clergymen today who regard sex as St. Augustine did, but his basic theology, reinforced by four centuries of Calvinism, still permeates our modern society and has made millions of modern people infantile in their sexual attitudes. There can be no question that much of our adolescent silliness on this subject derives from these buried taboos, and no question that they have become an increasing embarrassment to thinking clergymen. Yet there lingers the feeling, also adolescent, that one dare not publicly attack an ancient church father in the weakest point of his theology without endangering the Christian faith. I don't see how anyone acquainted with the teachings and personality of Jesus can believe this, but manifestly some do, despite the fact that Jesus has outlived everything these dark minds have done and thought of His name.

Now against D. H. Lawrence, who was also a genius, this old taboo-morality of Augustine and Calvin could not fail to emerge as a fighting enemy. Lawrence intended that it should. Therefore it follows, since we live in a free country, that his morality should have a fair chance of reaching an audience. Let it grapple with Augustine's, and Augustine's with it.

For all these reasons I insist that the banning of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was an act more serious in the area of civil liberties than the banners assumed it was. The attackers sincerely believed, at least on the conscious level, that nothing was involved here but pornography, and exercised their right to uphold their opinions against those of the defence. But the case was not that simple by any means.

It is because the ethical issue involved in *Lady Chatterley* has been obscured by sensationalism that I, for one, was not sorry this case was lost in a lower court. As it goes up to appeal, there will be wider debate on the real issue, and this may result in clarity. The issue is not, as many believe who wish the book to go free whether a scandalous work should be sold or not. It is whether a moral work unavoidably containing material which scandalizes some people, should be banned for this secondary cause.

RECOLLECTIONS OF MALCOLM LOWRY

William McConnell

ON MAY 14th, 1927, Malcolm Lowry was 17 years old. On that day the Liverpool Correspondent for the *London Evening News* interviewed him just before he sailed on the cargo steamer PYRRHUS as a deckhand at 50/- per month. He told the Correspondent: "No silk-cushion youth for me. I want to see the world and rub shoulders with its oddities, and get some experience of life before I go back to Cambridge University." The Correspondent interviewed his rich cotton broker father and his mother, too, but only her comments are on record: "He is bent on a literary career, and his short story writing is all to him," said Mrs. Lowry, when the ship had left.

On his return from Port Said, Shanghai and Yokohama Lowry was again interviewed, this time by *The Daily Mail*. With characteristic candour he announced he didn't intend to go to sea again, since a fourteen hour day, chipping paint, scrubbing decks and polishing brass was not to his liking. He said he intended to go on to university, compose fox-trots and write fiction.

One of his intentions was realised, as we know, for Malcolm Lowry wrote, among many other works, one of the great novels of the twentieth century, *Under the Volcano*. Despite the early experience of his four month voyage as deckhand, he returned to sea, travelling to every ocean, beachcombed in the South Seas, settled for troubled spates in Mexico, Haiti, Germany, until he finally found, again close to the sea, a waterfront shack at Dollarton, ten miles from Vancouver, where he could write and live in his own peculiar, uneasy peace.

It was during this last period of his life that I met Malcolm and his wife, Margerie, (who published many fictional works under her maiden name, Margerie Bonner). It was at a cocktail party at the Caulfield home of Alan Crawley. A. J. M. Smith and the American poet, Theodore Roethke, had persuaded Malcolm to attend. He was pathologically shy and any group of more than four

usually caused perspiration to drip from his face, but on this occasion there was no shyness. It was a gathering of writers, of like beings, of natural and mutual acceptance. He hated literary people; to the same degree he accepted and loved those he felt were dedicated to literature. Quite often this blind acceptance caused him self-hurt and disappointment, but more often it created deep friendship.

Physically, Lowry was a powerful man: short, broad-shouldered, with a tremendous chest. His gait was rolling, whether as accommodation to his bulk or the result of years at sea, or simply the acquisition of an imagined habit, I don't know. He was fair-headed, with muscular arms and small feet. Most impressive of all were his intense blue eyes which looked into and through your own, which gazed into the distance, which altered in hue as his mood varied.

Most of his life from the time he left university until he discovered Dollarton was spent in physical activity in odd corners of the globe, but, like the scattered notes which he wrote on bus transfers, cigarette papers or any other chance piece of paper, all of his life was lived for metamorphosis into short story, poem or novel. He could discard nothing and, consequently, writing to him was not the usual casting for idea, figure of speech, or character portrayal, but rather a painful, tortuous process of selection and arrangement.

He had that rare (and rather frightening) gift of near total recall. I saw him sometimes after intervals of several months. For the first five minutes he would stare contemplatively across Burrard Inlet at the evening outline of Burnaby Mountain, then reflectively at a gull sweeping low over the water, then finally at me. Out of the air with magic, it seemed to one like myself who had little memory whatever, he would recount word-perfect an argument we had had on our previous meeting. He would review exactly what each of us had said, then quietly announce that he had been (or I had been, it doesn't matter) in error in a particular statement. Accuracy, even on trivial matters, was an obsession.

This accuracy was one of the strengthening qualities of his writing. By exact physical depiction, razor-edged characterization, evocation of mood, he had some alchemy which would make each line true in detail, yet with layers of meaning which could be peeled off by the reader without the onion becoming smaller. In his great novel, *Under the Volcano*, this is revealed in many pages. For example, I recall Malcolm describing to me how, when a young man in Wales, he had come across an amusing insertion in a Visitors' Book in a hotel. He described it on several occasions, each time not really adding anything, yet casting a different spell over the event on each telling. Consider my delight, then, when I encountered it in another guise on page 181:

"Climbed the Parson's Nose," one had written, in the visitors' book at the little Welsh rock-climbing hotel, "in twenty minutes. Found the rocks very easy." "Came down the Parson's Nose," some immortal wag had added a day later, "in twenty seconds. Found the rocks very hard." . . . So now, as I approach the second half of my life, unheralded, unsung, and without a guitar, I am going back to sea again: perhaps these days of waiting are more like that droll descent, to be survived in order to repeat the climb. At the top of the Parson's Nose you could walk home to tea over the hills if you wished, just as the actor in the Passion Play can get off his cross and go home to his hotel for a Pilsener.

We walked along the beach one late afternoon—a warm afternoon when the tide was full, the salt-chuck quiet as if it had been fed to satiety and didn't want the never-changing chore of accommodating itself to the tug of the moon. We were having one of those intense and enjoyable silences which can cement each to the other without any mortar of words. We came across the oil encrusted corpse of a seagull. I knew, of course, how passionately fond of birds Malcolm was (a well-marked pocket-size volume of Peterson's *Field Guide* was usually beside him) and I made some remark about someone's criminality in dumping bunker oil in the harbour. Malcolm nodded, then pointed without a word to the flares of the oil refineries on the other shore, his hand sweeping even further to indicate the smog which sawmills in Vancouver's False Creek were emitting to soot the landscape. Later, when we had doubled back up the hillside and through the ever-green forest, his fingers felt the new sharp green needles of the young hemlocks and he contemplatively dug with his toe at the dropped needles which had contributed to the forest loam. A deep observer, he believed nothing was or could be wasted in nature and that death itself was necessary for creation.

Was this knowledge, perhaps, the reason for Lowry's bouts of alcoholism? Unlike most of his friends I never saw him during such times. He did discuss everything but the reason for them with me candidly and simply (there was no false pride, no pantomiming of excuse, but simple direct statement). On several occasions I know his fear of groups triggered him off. Once he arrived at an august tea party staggering and all but speechless, wanting to hammer ragtime on the piano instead of being listened to with respect and awe. There were other occasions when he was alone and his loneliness simply could not be borne. I suspect that sometimes the creativity which constantly welled up from within himself could not be channelled as he wished it and had to be deadened by some anodyne. He didn't possess the routine and familiar antidotes with which the majority of us are equipped. During these frightening periods his understanding and devoted wife and the few friends, such as Einar and Muriel Neilson of Bowen Island, to whom he turned like a child, carried him through and, more important, beyond,

during the even more bitter period of contriteness.

He told me one day that during the long months when he had written *Under the Volcano* he had not taken a drink even of wine, though he had been staying with a friend who had vineyards and made wine while he wrote. I mentioned earlier how every tag end of event was of importance to him, and somehow incorporated into his writing. This was true even of his attempts at forgetfulness, his wild occasional descents to escape the unbidden imagery he could not momentarily harness. He describes just such a period experienced by the Consul:

. Why then should he be sitting in the bathroom? Was he asleep? dead? passed out? Was he in the bathroom now or half an hour ago? Was it night? Where were the others? But now he heard some of the others' voices on the porch. Some of the others? It was just Hugh and Yvonne, of course, for the doctor had gone. Yet for a moment he could have sworn the house had been full of people; why it was still this morning, or barely afternoon, only 12:15 in fact by his watch. At eleven he'd been talking to Mr. Quincey. "Oh Oh." The Consul groaned aloud It came to him he was supposed to be getting ready to go to Tomalin. But how had he managed to persuade anyone he was sober enough to go to Tomalin? And why, anyhow, Tomalin?

A procession of thoughts like little elderly animals filed through the Consul's mind, and in his mind too he was steadily crossing the porch again, as he had done an hour ago, immediately after he'd seen the insect flying away out of the cat's mouth.

Unlike most of us, Malcolm had not lost the wise-eyed innocence of childhood. In fact, many of the incidents of his childhood remained in his mind vivid as current events. He told us on several occasions, for example, of a nurse his wealthy family employed when he was very young. She had loved his older brother and to his horror hated him. Once she had wheeled his cart along the cliff-edge, high above the rolling sea. He described with quiet exactitude her features as she leaned over with a blanket to smother him, how he screamed (the exact key), and then the saving running footsteps of his favoured older brother which interrupted the scene.

I used to steal glances at my seven year old son when Malcolm and Margerie visited the cottage by the lake in which we were then living. His features were as mobile as Malcolm's when Malcolm was talking, as intent, and as unspoiled by conditioned attitudes. Those two instinctively understood what each other was feeling as well as taking in the surface articulation.

Don't let me suggest that Malcolm was sombre. He had a huge Rabelaisian sense of humour and, oh rare quality, could laugh with gusto at himself. One afternoon we were visiting Malcolm and Margerie at their shack. It was several months after he had injured his leg badly when he fell from his wharf on to lowtide rocks

(preoccupied with dialogue, so he said, dialogue to finish off a discussion he, Margerie, my wife and myself had had months before). He described the horror of the Catholic hospital where he had been taken (the cowled nuns, for some reason, were the opposite to Sisters of Charity to his pain-wracked mind) and the even greater horror of later visiting his orthopaedic specialist who sat examining his leg and remarking he might lose it. Malcolm graphically detailed the whole room, his utterances of despair that he might lose the leg, then the aseptic smile of the doctor who casually remarked, as he reached behind and brought out a new nickel shining artificial limb and stroked it, that it was as good as a natural one for the classical case of amputation on another patient he had. Desultory talk followed this devilish recount, then Malcolm, who was always fascinated by the law, asked me whether I had had any interesting law cases recently. I was young in my profession then and, perhaps over enthusiastically, I described a Motor Manslaughter case I had defended. I described the difficulties. The accused was on the wrong side of a straight road, he had spent the afternoon drinking beer in a pub, and the police had found a half-finished bottle of whiskey in his truck after the accident. In recounting all the evidence against my client, then finally the jury's acquittal verdict, I gleefully remarked, "It was a classical case!" I looked up and there was Malcolm stroking an imaginary artificial steel limb, murmuring 'classical case', then he erupted into roars of gargantuan laughter. His interesting thesis of 'never trust an expert' probably had some merit.

Malcolm personally knew a number of great writers who admired his work and communicated their admiration to him. I think, from recalling our conversation, one of his special friends was Conrad Aiken. Aiken recognised his genius long before the public success of *Under the Volcano*. While still at Cambridge some of Lowry's short stories were published in America, and in 1932 his first novel *Ultramarine* received a rather indifferent public response. It was during this period, as I recall, that Aiken encouraged and stimulated him.

He had known well, while in England, Dylan Thomas. Upon the occasion when Thomas first came to Vancouver for a public poetry reading, Malcolm, the shyest man I have ever known, remarked laconically that Dylan Thomas for all his flamboyant public personality, was really a very shy person. After Dylan Thomas' reading a reception was arranged to which the Lowrys and ourselves were invited. Despite Malcolm's dislike of people in groups ('individuals lose their most precious possession—their identity') and his antipathy towards 'literary people' ('they don't write, they talk aseptically about it as if there were no bloody birth pangs and the work emerges well-scrubbed') he wanted to meet Dylan. In

the many-roomed converted old house where the reception was held both were for a long time in separate rooms, both being lionized and hating it. At length friends managed to bring them together. They warmly clasped hands and Malcolm said simply: "Hullo, Dylan," while Dylan Thomas replied with equal shyness, "Hullo, Malcolm." In retrospect I feel similar inner fires were burning in each because they could not render the whole of their experience into a creative mould.

In Malcolm's relaxed periods he strummed a huge repertoire of songs, chancies and tunes he had composed (including a lively national anthem) on a battered ukulele, and he was never so happy as when he was immersed in this music of his own making, whether bawdy Spanish tunes picked up in some waterfront bistro in North Africa, or plaintive Chinese rise and fall he had heard in Singapore. Hours would pass delightfully, for he took it for granted you shared his happiness.

After the publication of *Under the Volcano* Malcolm and his wife travelled for a year, visiting Haiti, England and the Continent. With his habitual generosity he shared his royalties with the many he encountered who claimed to be able to put words onto paper. When he returned to his beloved shack at Dollarton there were periods of acute financial want and it was during one of these periods there occurred a minor event which highlighted two of his characteristics—naïveté and the ability to laugh at himself.

About this time one of our popular national magazines printed, as an advertisement for a bank, a single-page short story headed: "We Printed This Because We Liked It". At its conclusion there was an invitation to other writers to make submissions.

Many months later Malcolm laughingly told me of his submission. It started off as a well-planned anecdote but somehow it became longer and longer. Feverish weeks were spent as the anecdote dilated and expanded into the eventually completed whole—a piece of work which would have required ten issues of the whole magazine instead of a single page. He had waited patiently for weeks to receive the bank's cheque before he gradually realized the violent sea-change his creativity had caused. Fortunately, about this time royalties from some of the translated editions of *Under the Volcano* began trickling in.

Many are generous, as he was, with material possessions, but few extend the intellectual generosity he was capable of. It mattered not to Malcolm whether someone was famous or unknown, skilled in the craft of writing or a fumbling tyro. He, who knew how difficult it was to piece together common words so they sang and wreathed in rich meaning, gave consideration, time, advice (but never

didactically, always subjectively) and encouragement to all who asked for it. He not only loved language and the individual warp and woof rendered by a writer, but revered it. He, a master, considered himself a tyro and anyone who tackled the same task with love he viewed as a potential genius.

Malcolm's relationship with his wife was far more than the customary one. They were partners in everything they did, sharing the successes or the periods of actual want with equal zest. He was proud of her attractive gaiety and her theatrical (she had been an actress) manner. More important, he was as concerned with her writing as he was with his own—and as proud of it. Margerie's opinion was constantly sought and considered. Equally, her concern and consideration for his welfare, her honest and penetrating appraisals of his work supplied Malcolm with a reserve of strength and stimulation which always carried him through the bleak non-productive periods every writer encounters. Margerie possessed that rare quality—intellectual honesty and forthrightness. They admired and respected as well as loved each other.

I recall Malcolm's delight when I introduced him to T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. I was a bit taken aback at his enthusiasm until I realised that Lawrence had a similar quality in his writing (not often encountered), that of concern with metaphysics. "I must write to him," he told me. I reminded him that Lawrence had been dead for decades. Malcolm ignored this, for to him a writer never died. He accepted it on the surface, of course, so improvised long verbal letters instead which enlivened our walks. The symbolism in Lowry's work is not confined to the work itself. It was part of his daily life. His world was peopled with black and white forces. His daily swim (even when light skim ice scummed the surface of the deep North Arm) was not merely a swim but a metaphysical experience. I've mentioned the gas flares at the cracking plant. For hours he would discuss them, not as hot crackling oil flames spurting into the evening's darkness, but as living sentient forces which peopled his world. In the same way the Consul, towards the end of *Under the Volcano*, symbolically invests a calendar.

He saw again in his mind's eye that extraordinary picture on Laruelle's wall, Los Borrachones, only now it took on a somewhat different aspect. Mightn't it have another meaning, that picture, unintentional as its humour, beyond the symbolically obvious? He saw those people like spirits appearing to grow more free, more separate, their distinctive noble faces more distinctive, more noble the higher they ascended into the light; those florid people resembling huddled fiends, becoming more like each other, more joined together, more as one fiend, the further down they hurled into the darkness.

His last novel (unfortunately the middle section was taken out and never replaced) was typical of this. For several years there had been recurrent rumours that the waterfront shacks, including his own, were to be bulldozed and the occupant squatters forced out of the beach strip. This had a terrible effect upon him. Here, as I said, he had found his uneasy peace. For a month he and Margerie had searched the Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island for an alternate home. The novel was, on the surface, about the search for a home and dispossession, but the recurrent symbolism of many facets raced through it contrapuntally. Just as *Under the Volcano* had been written and rewritten four times (once completely rewritten in a month when the previous draft had perished in a fire), so did this final and tremendous work undergo many changes and alterations.

One afternoon—early, about 2:30—he started to read the first draft of his last novel to myself, Margerie and my wife. The typescript was interlineated with his spidery written additions and changes. He would finish a page and, without dropping a word, walk into the bedroom to pick up a scrap of waste paper on which was an inserted paragraph. We had brought a bottle of gin. As it was a festive and important occasion he had bought two himself. Margerie, my wife and I had several drinks, but were spellbound after that by his resonant voice and the wonder of his prose. He read on and on, drinking in sips straight gin, without slurring a syllable or slighting a word. Finally, at 2:30 in the morning, he finished the last paragraph, the three bottles empty. My wife and I were terribly exhausted, but elated. When we got up to leave Malcolm was immersed in a paragraph he wanted to rewrite again, but rose to light our way up the trail with warmth and thanks, as if it had been we who had performed the favour. “God bless you,” he would always say, instead of “Goodbye”. This is the Malcolm we’ll remember, and the one to be seen in his verse and prose.

Last month we drove by on the cliff road overlooking the former Dollarton shacks. Bulldozers were matting the underbrush to make way for a park. The squatters’ shacks, Malcolm’s included, had long since disappeared. We were sad and spoke retrospectively, then brightened, remembering the seagull dead from oil, the dropped needles which made the forest floor. He surpassed all of these, Malcolm did, for during his lifetime, not after it, he created life from his own.

THE TRANSMUTATION OF HISTORY

LANDMARKS IN
CANADIAN HISTORICAL FICTION
FOR CHILDREN

Joan Selby

THE CHILD has an enviable capacity to fall in love with a book. His response is total—intellect, emotion and spirit caught and held in one great involution. The outside world excluded, the adult unheeded, the clock stilled; his inner world becomes a suspended bubble (its growth as magic and as sudden) holding a universe of depths unsounded, lengths unmeasured, heights unscaled. Suspicions are necessary and right to one who gives his heart so completely, and the child is wary. He is as closed to dulness, to the inept, to the contrived dissemination of knowledge, as he is open to the play of inventive imagination and, subconsciously, to the riches of style, language and form, to the intellectual experiment and the mystical experience. He cannot analyze these things, for he is not vocal in adult terms and concepts. The very genius of childhood lies not in analysis, but in response. This unlimited capacity for instant and instinctive response is the key to children's literature; it is evoked by the integration of simplicity of expression with complexity of concept.

This integration is nowhere more necessary than in the very special field of historical fiction for children. Especially is it necessary in the presentation of Canada's history, for that is largely a hidden history, lacking in open struggle; a subtle history without decisive climactic incident. It is an unorthodox history, difficult to reduce to the simplifications of liberty opposed to tyranny, good to evil, that have developed into the strong, familiar tribal myth so popularized in the United States. The history of our southern neighbour lends itself more easily to a child's understanding; our own begs modifications and interpolations.

Considering the difficulties of a meaningful presentation to children, and remembering that only within the last thirty years have historians brought a truly exploratory understanding to Canada's past, it is not surprising that juvenile historical writing has but recently developed attitudes that may truly be considered

Canadian. Historical non-fiction for children has indeed attained a certain recognised standard in the series which Macmillan have been publishing for some years under the title, *Great Stories of Canada*. There is considerable variation among the individual books in this series, but an overall competence—and in some instances an excellence—in historical comprehension and expression is evident. Historical fiction for children in Canada, with which this article is concerned, has not yet attained the same stature. Its development has been more hesitant, and has only gained in authority in the last twenty years, dependent as it was upon the initial establishment of a national historiography.

There had been earlier attempts, of course, for growth is never a sudden and miraculous full blossoming. Marjorie Pickthall, for example, wrote three juveniles in the early 1900's, which are now comparatively scarce. Representative of these is *Dick's Desertion: a boy's adventures in Canadian forests*, a didactic and moralistic tale in the tradition of the nineteenth century. For theme it has the call of the northlands, luring a young lad from love and family to roam the forests in the manner of the *coureur-de-bois*, but it fails either to exploit its historical setting satisfactorily or to depict a convincingly Canadian atmosphere. Indeed, Miss Pickthall wishes only to teach the homely truth that selfish inclination should give way before sacred duty and responsibility. The imaginative writer is obscured by the moralist, and the result is a contrived story with little authenticity or interest.

THE APPROACH to an imaginative use in juvenile fiction of Canada's history and its physical character begins later, and it becomes evident with the publication in the 1940's of such books as Mary Weekes' *Painted Arrows*. The didactic element that was so strong in *Dick's Desertion* is still present, for *Painted Arrows* contains much instruction in camp and Indian lore, but gone is the compulsion to moralise. The plot concerns the survival on the prairie, surrounded by hostile Indian bands, of a young boy whose beloved horse is his only companion. Mrs. Weekes took *Robinson Crusoe* for her model, and she does not hesitate to interrupt her narrative on occasion to draw comparisons between her young hero and the celebrated castaway. She fails to parallel Defoe's careful detailing of the commonplace that leads, inevitably and rightly, to the uncommon disclosure of a man's soul. Yet there is an original insight in the way she shapes her character and in her understanding of the effect of the Canadian prairie on

the individual who inhabits it in solitude.

Despite the shift in approach suggested by *Painted Arrows*, the didactic element in Canadian juvenile historical fiction has remained surprisingly—and often disastrously—persistent. In 1945 for instance, Mary F. Moore published her *Canadian Magic*, an extraordinarily artificial book in which an English school-girl is visited by a familiar, the Spirit of Canada, who imparts a tedious amount of information to his improbably eager pupil. There is no suggestion here of the creative imagination that is the key to historical or any other fiction; it is simply a disguised textbook in dialogue. In the same genre, ten years later, is Gladys Willison's *Land of the Chinook* (1955), a question-and-answer book on Alberta's early days in which the rôle of pedantic enlightenment is assumed by an all-knowing grandfather. Miss Willison's book has indeed a less contrived approach than *Canadian Magic*, but it is dedicated to the same false premises, that instruction for children must be cast in an "entertaining" form, and that entertainment, alone, has no positive value. An even more recent example of this out-dated approach is *The Young Surveyor* (1956) by Olive Knox. Based on the diary and field books of the C.P.R. surveyor, Edward Jarvis, it employs the obvious device of a young tenderfoot, travelling with the surveying team, who must be instructed in every detail of the work and of the countryside. The reader is not even spared the appalling irrelevancy of an explanation of the effect of altitude on the boiling point of water! On the other hand, Richard Lambert has demonstrated effectively in his *Trailmaker: the story of Alexander Mackenzie* (1957) that undidactic and really creative fiction can be constructed from an explorer's journal if it is used imaginatively. *Trailmaker* has the sharpness of pace and the authenticity of situation that *The Young Surveyor* lacks; it involves the young reader in an exciting and inspiring undertaking without allowing its techniques to become obvious, and it remains true to its intent, rigorously suppressing any temptation to instruct or to digress.

The advance towards a well-integrated historical fiction for children is shown particularly well in the work of the prolific writer, John Hayes, whose achievements have been publicly acknowledged by the granting of three Governor-General's Awards in the field of juvenile writing. Hayes' merits are evident as soon as one begins to read his books. He is a competent craftsman, concerned for the plausibility of his situations, and he is adept at an easy and assured dialogue unimpeded by the kind of tiresome deviations that halt the movement of the narrative. Most important, he has a genuine sense of the course and direction of Canadian history.

Yet Hayes has his faults, as one can see clearly from an examination of his three prize-winning novels, *A Land Divided* (1951), *Rebels Ride at Night* (1953) and *The Dangerous Cove* (1957). His books are often lacking in emotional warmth, and they do not always appeal sufficiently to the child's inborn dramatic sense. His greatest difficulty lies, however, in his inability to create an imaginative and original plot. He works to a relatively unvarying formula which carries the story forward fairly effectively and which can be fitted easily enough into any historic period. Its ingredients are the teen-aged hero, mettlesome and resourceful, opposed to the utterly base and despicable villain, and the action consists always of a series of clashes between these two basic characters primarily on a physical level—fights, captures and escapes. There is little attempt to develop the hero's inner conflicts or to resolve his personal difficulties.

I do not wish to suggest that Hayes is incapable of developing his craft; on the contrary, over the past decade he has shown a steadily growing mastery of style and content. Yet it is surprising—and indicative of the fact that an author's total artistic achievement does not necessarily keep pace with his development in technique—that the most recent of the three books I have mentioned, *The Dangerous Cove*, is at once the most closely plotted and the least historically realised. The background of this tale is the struggle between the settlers in Newfoundland and the Devon captains who came each spring to claim the island and its produce for their own. Reversing his usual approach, Hayes has produced a carefully detailed plot, and as an adventure story *The Dangerous Cove* certainly has movement and involvement, but it shows little depth of historical comprehension.

By contrast, in both of the earlier books I have mentioned, *A Land Divided* and *Rebels Ride at Night*, Hayes shows a fine sense of the ebb-and-flow of history in the making and of the pressures exercised upon those individuals who are caught in an eventful time and place. *A Land Divided* in particular reduces its central historic event—the expulsion of the Acadians—to human, understandably pathetic terms. The chief impetus of the book lies in the adventure tale of a young half-French, half-English boy who braves all dangers to rescue his father from the villainous Vaudreuil, but in the background, well rendered by the author, lie the tragedies of division between friend and friend, and, deeper, more painful still, division within a family. It is an interesting treatment for children of one of the saddest, most romantic and most easily impassioned episodes of Canada's story. True, its pathos might have been more strongly presented, but one must consider that it is intended for boys, and a boy's tolerance of any sentiment that might be termed mawkish is thin indeed.

Rebels Ride at Night is a more adult presentation of a more difficult event in Canadian history, the Rebellion of 1837. Such an event raises the problem of how an author should deal with the simplification that is inevitable when history is presented to children. In this case the actual issues at stake can be simplified to democratic movement versus autocratic rule without very serious historical distortion. The personalities involved, on the other hand, demand a deeper analysis. William Lyon Mackenzie and those who followed him to the tragicomic finale of Montgomery's Tavern are much too complex in their fatal mixture of idealism and political naivety to present in black and white. Furthermore, the culmination of their cause in a show of violence is outside the Canadian tradition. Revolution has played no really decisive part in our evolution as a nation; radicalism, where present, has usually been muted.

Hayes, then, was faced with a certain hazard when he decided that his young hero, for good reasons, should support Mackenzie. Faint-heartedness, or worse, a faltering and turning from a losing cause still held to be true, will not be tolerated in a hero by juvenile readers. To solve his difficulty, Hayes subtly plants an uneasiness in his young protagonist's mind as he listens to Mackenzie's frenzied oratory and his urgings to ill-considered action. Thus the denouement—the fiasco of Montgomery's Tavern—is anticipated throughout the tale. This is skilfully done, and, if the plot is once again trite, hinging on stolen tax receipts and the forfeiture of Frank's farm, the re-creation of historical atmosphere is excellent. Hayes depicts convincingly the air of conspiracy among the discontented farmers of Upper Canada and among the labourers and longshoremens of the towns, and in this, perhaps more than in any of his other books, he realizes a total picture of the times—the social conditions, the political dilemmas, the corruption and speculation which are concretely represented in the impassable roads and the church reserves cutting across the fertile land.

It is interesting to compare *Rebels Ride at Night* with another story of the Mackenzie rebellion, Lyn Cook's *Rebel on the Trail*. Through the eyes of an eleven years' old girl Miss Cook portrays the dissension and the precarious balance within a pioneer family of Upper Canada, caught between the eldest son's radical, pro-Mackenzie ideas and the grandfather's religious justification of the *status quo*. Neither the situation nor the ideas that emerge from it are easy to express through the mind of a little girl, and the author's failure to do so convincingly is the book's weakness. The literary convention of straining complexities of plot and personality through a child's interpretation has some value in adult books, where it is used to heighten the poignancy of the drama, hidden from the child but evident to

the reader. It is manifestly more difficult to use such a device in a child's book where the reader is more dependent on the point of view of the protagonist and to a great extent shares it. *Rebel on the Trail* seems to be written for readers between nine and twelve, which brings the added limitation that few children of this age are equipped to take the larger view of a historical period.

Basically, the difficulty lies therefore in achieving a meaningful integration of story and character with the particular historical situation. Hayes had the same problem, but he was helped by being able to utilise actual events more fully. His heroes participate directly in the actions of the time; they fight in the battle of Montgomery's Tavern or aid the Acadians to board the exile ships. But Deborah, Miss Cook's heroine, is barred by age and sex from such participation; she must remain an observer. It is left to the reader to make the intellectual effort to identify with the times and to generate an emotional interest in the historic event. This is not the way of children. They absorb atmosphere almost, it would seem, by osmosis, but not by a conscious intellectual process. Miss Cook's book is at once too adult in concept, too young in presentation to accomplish her larger intent and give a composite view of Upper Canada during "the troubles".

TWO OTHER WAYS of handling this problem of integration of plot and character with event are offered in Marion Greene's *Canal Boy* and Wilma Pitchford Hays' *Drummer Boy for Montcalm*, both published in 1959. The first of these, *Canal Boy*, is really a pseudo-historical novel, using the past incidentally, as the setting for what is essentially a timeless mystery story. A pair of pistols are stolen, suspicions are aroused against a teen-aged boy, and he is finally vindicated. It all happens in Ottawa and Montreal of the 1820's and historical characters like Colonel By play their parts, but the time might just as easily be the 1950's and Colonel By any one of a dozen prominent men, the leading citizens of modern Ottawa, Winnipeg or Vancouver. I am not suggesting that *Canal Boy* is an inferior book; its language is attractive, its plot is closely woven, it provokes excitement. Yet it is not in any true sense a historical novel, and it represents an evasion rather than a solution of the problem of integration. The plot is simply imposed on the historic time; it does not evolve out of it, nor, indeed, does it have any logical or vital connection with it. The historical insight the book affords is negligible.

Drummer Boy for Montcalm exploits its historical event, the battle for Quebec, to the full. The story is the event, and the event the story, so close is the integration. It opens with the young French hero, Peter Demo, coming to a Quebec already threatened by the English, and it closes with the city's fall. Peter serves under Montcalm as a drummer boy, and the whole interest of the book is concentrated on the defence of Quebec and Peter's part in it. Despite this singleness of intent, the story is deepened by the fact that Quebec is shown as a city threatened not only from without her walls, but also from within by the greed and corruption of the Intendant Bigot and his accomplice, Cadet. *Drummer Boy for Montcalm* is not so stylistically pleasing as *Canal Boy*—the lyrical phrase is wanting—but it is a competent piece of writing and it *is*, unquestionably, a true and well-integrated historical novel.

Nowhere is the growth of artistic conception in Canada's juvenile historical fiction more evident than in the changing presentation of the Indian. From Peter Many-Names of *Dick's Desertion*, who is but a symbol, through innumerable Indian companions to young heroes—mere shadowy, inarticulate copies of their white friends—to Edith Lambert Sharp's vital realization of an Indian youth in *Nkwala* (1958), there is a fundamental advance in historical and psychological insight.

A glance at some of the more ambitious books in this field will help to chart the progress. In *Black Falcon* (1954) Olive Knox took as her basic material the narrative of John Tanner, who was captured by the Shawnees at the age of eight. Such true-life accounts are obvious and legitimate sources for children's fiction, but they are too often told in a flat, laconic style and show little understanding of the ways and impulses of the Indians. John Tanner's narrative is no exception; it is an account more curious for the things it does not say than for the things it does.

No such limitation should hinder the creative transmutation of fiction, yet Miss Knox's re-creation in *Black Falcon* retains much of the flat, elliptical, honed-down approach of the original. Her attempts to bring life to the narrative are confined to inventing a rival, Cut-nose, who crosses John's path on the hunt, on the war trail, and in the courtship of a girl. What she does not do—and here the real interest of the narrative lies—is to develop what was left unsaid in the original, to explore those areas closed to Tanner but open to the creative investigator. As in her reconstruction from the Jervis journals in *The Young Surveyor*, Miss Knox shows that she lacks, not ordinary inventiveness, but certainly imaginative penetration.

A far better realisation of Indian captivity is given in John Craig's *The Long Return*. By not basing his account directly on any of the captivity narratives, Craig liberates himself from their limitations, and for this reason he is able to apprehend much more fully the essential conflict between captive and captors, between the white and the Indian world. This conflict is given strength when we see the captive hero's predicament becoming steadily more involved as his determination to return to his white parents is continually threatened by his growing affection for his Indian foster-parents. The resolve that rises above this conflict and motivates Thad's constant efforts to escape gives *The Long Return* a sense of purposeful continuity, and within the simple framework of capture, escape and flight, there is plenty of latitude for the detailing of Indian life without losing the tension of the main problem.

But the book that most surely reveals the inner meaning of Indian life in its psychological and its ceremonial aspects—and also one of the very best of Canadian books for children—is Edith Lambert Sharp's *Nkwala*. In structure it is a simple book; its complexities lie in language and imagery and an imaginative penetration of Indian life. Nkwala, a boy exceptionally gifted with an awareness of the hidden rhythms and impulses of life, makes the long journey with his people, the Spokane band of the Salish, from famine and death on the coast to life in the Okanagan. The reconstruction of the inner life of the Indian, so alien from our own, requires a perceptive and probing imagination, and Miss Sharp demonstrates that she has this rare gift. Following the emergence of the youth from the child into a growing awareness and acceptance of the obligations of manhood, she brings us into the very centre of the ceremonial drama of Salish life as it revolves around the initiation rites. Miss Sharp has a true feeling for the importance and solemnity of her theme, and she enhances it with a cadenced prose that unifies style with intent: “. . . the boy went alone into the mountains to search for his guardian spirit, his song, and his name. This was as his father, his father's father, and his father's father before him, had gone. He went alone, but always and forever with him went the law.”

THE EVOLUTION of Canadian historical fiction for children has been steady rather than brilliant. From its beginnings in an already outmoded tradition, the didactic tale, it has progressed towards a deeper realisation of the nature and the possibilities of Canadian history as well as acquiring a growing

technical competence. There is, indeed, a far greater distance between Marjorie Pickthall's *Dick's Desertion* and Edith Lambert Sharp's *Nkwala* than the mere passage of years or the changes in literary convention alone can explain. The advance has been in many directions—in historical truth, in psychological interpretation, in poetic intensity. But of course there is more unevenness in the overall development represented by this evolution than can be assessed through a comparison of one of the least and one of the best of Canadian juvenile historical novels, of the beginning and the end. The example of John Hayes, Canada's most prolific and—judging from the recognition accorded him—most successful juvenile writer, cannot be ignored. The lag in his novels between a keen historical insight and a chronic deficiency in such a basic element of the novelist's art as the construction of plot, suggests a lack of full maturity. There are several writers in this field who, like Hayes, have shown their general competence, and Edith Lambert Sharp has revealed a great deal more than competence. But enough imperfection remains to show that Canada's difficult history still presents a challenge that requires an unusual combination of complexity in concept and simplicity in form to meet it imaginatively and with truth to spirit as well as to fact.



WOLF IN THE SNOW

PART TWO

The House Repossessed

Warren Tallman

In the last issue of *Canadian Literature* we published the first part of Warren Tallman's *Wolf in the Snow*, tracing a common theme through novels by Sinclair Ross, W. O. Mitchell, Hugh MacLennan and Ernest Buckler. Now, in the second part, Mr. Tallman draws his theme together and relates it to the urban fiction of Mordecai Richler.

TO READ NOVELS is to gain impressions and these are what I tried to document in the first part of this essay. Now let the four windows of the fictional house become as one view and let the four occupants (Alan MacNeil from *Each Man's Son*, Philip Bentley from *As For Me and My House*, David Canaan from *The Mountain and the Valley* and Brian O'Connell from *Who Has Seen the Wind*) be re-grouped in a scene where the intangible which I have been calling Self looks toward other intangibles which most decisively influence its efforts to come into presence. At the back depth of this scene an immeasurable extent of snow is falling in a downward motion that is without force through a silence that is without contrasts to an earth that is "distorted, intensified, alive with thin, cold, bitter life". How bitter can best be shown by lifting the snow shroud to let the sun shine momentarily as Morley Callaghan's three hunters (*They Shall Inherit the Earth*) move across "rocky ridges and the desolate bush" to where a herd of deer whose hooves had become caught in the snow crust now lie in bloody heaps, abandoned where they have been destroyed by a pack of thin, cold, bitter wolves. As the hunters watch, the sun sets, and "a vast shadow fell over the earth, over the rocky ridges and the desolate bush and over the frozen carcasses." The night shadows mingle with the wolf shadows and cover over the dark blood of the deer as the wavering shroud of snow again begins to fall through

the "dreadful silence and coldness" felt everywhere at the back depth of the scene.

Move now to the middle depth where from the left a bleak expanse of prairie gives way at the centre to forests and mountains which merge on the right with the seacoast looking toward Europe where Alan stands with his mother as he did the day his novel began. That day, Alan emulated Yeats' sad shepherd from the opposite Irish shore, but in Alan's shell the "inarticulate moan" which the shepherd heard becomes that "oldest sound in the world", the remote waterfall roaring of his own salt blood. When Yeats' shepherd grew and changed into an ominous older man the sound in the shell darkened and strengthened into the beating of a prophetic "frenzied drum" which later still became a "blood-dimmed tide" carrying to the Europe of his imagination as to the Europe of succeeding years "the fury and the mire of human veins". But in Alan's less tutored ear on his side of the Atlantic, the blood sea sounds a more innocent summons as his thoughts follow along those unseen paths wandered by his bright and battered highland father. All Alan knows is that this father is the "strongest man in the world." All that this strongest man knows is the inner thrust of a ceaseless, mindless desire to prevail so powerful that even as he stumbles from defeat to defeat he follows this path down as though it were a way up to the championship, that mountain peak in the mind from which no opposing force could ever banish him. And so powerful is the son's consciousness of his father's destiny that even at the last when "the pack of muscles under the cloth of his jacket shifted" and the "poker shot up", Alan's immediate thought, far off from the murder at hand, is: "So that was what it meant to be the strongest man in the world!"

The desire to prevail. Move to where David Canaan is standing in a field beside the tracks as the train taking his friend Toby back to Halifax "came in sight thundering nearer and nearer". But Toby, whom David had expected to wave as the train drew past, "didn't glance once, not once, toward the house or the field." And as the thunder on the tracks diminishes, the thunder in David's blood takes over and "a blind hatred of Toby went through him. It seemed as if that were part of his own life he was seeing—his life stolen before his eyes." His protest at being cancelled out rises from hatred to rage and he "slashed at the pulpy turnips blindly wherever the hack fell", until he slashes his way through the rage and discovers a deeper depth where "in his mind there was only a stillness like the stillness of snow sifting through the spokes of wagon wheels or moonlight on the frozen road or the dark brook at night."

At the far left, the prairies slope away like Shelley's "lone and level sands." But there is no fallen Ozymandias here where no Ozymandias has ever stood. Instead

there are the false-front stores of Horizon, warped by the heat, sand-blasted by the drouth dust, and blown askew by the prairie wind. Here, Mrs. Bentley walks once more—as in her diary she so often mentions—along the tracks to the outskirts of town where five grain elevators stand “aloof and imperturbable, like ancient obelisks”, as dust clouds “darkening and thinning and swaying” in the ominous upper prairie of the sky seem “like a quivering backdrop before which was about to be enacted some grim, primeval tragedy.” The swaying dust clouds above, the darkening prairie beneath, the ancient-seeming elevators she huddles against, as well as her mournful sense of the grim, the primeval, the tragic—these details speak for the entire scene which I have been sketching. They speak of a tragedy in which the desire to prevail that drives self on its strange journeys toward fulfillment is brought to an impasse on northern fields of a continent which has remained profoundly indifferent to its inhabitant, transplanted European man. The continent itself—the gray wolf whose shadow is underneath the snow—has resisted the culture, the cultivation, the civilization which is indigenous to Europe but alien to North America even though it is dominant in North America.

If Alan, Philip, Brian and David are notably unable to discover alternatives to the isolation from which they suffer, this is not because they are resourceless persons but because the isolation is ingrained, inherent, indwelling. One alternative is much like the next when all the rooms are equally empty in the vast space-haunted house they occupy. And those gods who over-rule the house toward whom self quickens in its need to prevail are such as preside over forests and open fields, mountains, prairies and plains: snow gods, dust gods, drought gods, wind gods, wolf gods—native to the place and to the empty manner born. These divinities speak, if at all, to all such as lone it toward the mountain pass and the hidden lake, the rushing river and the open empty road. And the experiential emptiness of the place shows on the faces of such loners as that weathered yet naive expressionlessness, the stamp of the man to whom little or nothing has happened in a place where the story reads, not here, not much, not yet. Underneath the European disguises North American man assumes, self too is such a loner. And the angel at his shoulder, met everywhere in the weave of these novels because it is everywhere and omnipresent in the vast house we occupy, is silence. Out of the weave of the silence emerges the shroud of snow. But underneath the snow, the dark blood brightens.

For self does not readily accept separation, isolation and silence. These are conditions of non-being, and whether one assumes that the ground toward which self struggles in its search for completion is divine and eternal or only individual

and temporal, either alternative supposes rebellion against no being at all. It is from this fate that Brian O'Connell flees in panic the night he walks from his uncle's farm to town. "It was as though he listened to the drearing wind and in the spread darkness of the prairie night was being drained of his very self." It is against this same fate that Alan MacNeil's father beats with his fists, seeking some eminence from which the physical strength that is his measure of self cannot be pulled down to defeat. It is against this fate that Philip Bentley struggles those evenings in his study, seeking to liberate "some twisted stumbling" creative power locked up within him even though all he can create is sketches which reveal how pervasively non-being has invaded his life. And it is against this fate that David Canaan slashes in the field beside the tracks before yielding when he lies down against the flank of the mountain under a blanket of snow upon a bed of silence.

But it is not here that the scene dims out. For the last sound that David hears is that North American lullaby which sings the sleeping self awake as a train "whistled beyond the valley" then "thundered along the rails and was gone." Had Alan MacNeil turned his back upon Europe, the blood sound in the shell would have been that rising up from the railroad earth, those train sounds hooting all loners home to where, up front in the scene, the dark silence breaks up into the gushing of the neon and the noise.

BUT ALONG St. Urbain street in Montreal, the marvellous, the splendid and the amazing have given way to the commonplace, the shabby and the unspeakable. And even before thinking of anything so portentous as a new self, Mordecai Richler has been engaged in the much more onerous task of clearing away the debris which has accumulated in a world where all disguises have been put in doubt. His first three novels are studies of ruined lives: André, the guilt-haunted Canadian artist, who is eventually murdered by the Nazi, Kraus, whose sister Theresa then commits suicide; the guilt-ridden homosexual, Derek, his equally guilty sister, Jessie, and her equally guilty husband, the alcoholic, Barney; the Wellington College professor, Theo Hall and his wife, Miriam; Norman, the American Fifth Amendment expatriate, whose brother is murdered by Ernst, the German youth whom Sally, the Toronto girl, ruins her life trying to save. All of these persons reach out, cry out, for any masks other than the ones they have.

And they testify to Richler's affinity with that side of modern life where the misbegotten wander through ruined Spains of self-pity, poisoned to the point of near and at times actual madness by self-loathing. However, Richler does not seek out these persons in order to demonstrate several times over that we are wrapped up like so many sweating sardines in world misery, world guilt, world sorrow. Like André, Norman and Noah, the protagonists of these novels, he is inside the misery looking for a way out. What looks out is a courageous intelligence struggling to realize that the tormented sleep of self loathing which he explores is just that—a sleep, a dream, a nightmare: but not the reality.

In his fourth novel, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, the sleeper begins to come awake. The nightmare is still there, but it is not the same nightmare. In *The Acrobats* and *A Choice of Enemies*, Richler chooses areas of world guilt as the basis for dream terror. The Spanish war, the second world war, the victims of these wars and of their ideologies make up the manifest content, the general human failure which images and invites the latent personal failures represented. People whose lives have gone smash drift into areas where life has gone smash and consort with the ghosts who have survived. In *Duddy Kravitz* the scope contracts. Both the ghosts who make up the nightmare and the ideologies through which they wander have faded from mind. Duddy's father, his brother Lenny, his uncle and aunt, his teacher MacPherson, his friend Virgil, his enemy Dingleman, and his shiksa Yvette all live tangled lives in a world where they do not know themselves. But they are caught up by personal disorders rather than world disorder, family strife rather than international strife, individual conflict rather than ideological conflict. And within the localized dream we meet an entirely different dreamer. We meet the direct intelligence and colloquial exuberance that is Duddy's style—and Richler's.

T. S. Eliot has said that poetry in our time is a mug's game. So is fiction, and Richler is one of the mugs. Duddy has ceased to care for appearances and this insouciance releases him from the nightmare. All of the other people in the novel cannot possess themselves because their vital energies are devoted full-time to maintaining the false appearances in terms of which they identify themselves. These appearances—the cultural, ethical, communal pretensions to which they cling—mask over but scarcely conceal the distinctly uncultured, unethical, isolated actuality in which they participate. Hence the importance in their lives of Dingleman, the Boy Wonder, who is a projection of their actual longings to be at ease in Zion in a Cadillac at the same time as he is a projection of the limitation of these longings, being hopelessly crippled. But Duddy, who has ceased to care for

appearances, sees people for what they are, himself included. And what he sees, he accepts—himself included. In an acquisitive world he is exuberantly acquisitive. When he is tricked, he weeps. When threatened, he becomes dangerous. When attacked, he bites back. When befriended, he is generous. When hard-pressed he becomes frantic. When denied, he is filled with wrath. From the weave of this erratic shuttling, a self struggles into presence, a naive yet shrewd latter-day Huck Finn, floating on a battered money raft down a sleazy neon river through a drift of lives, wanting to light out for somewhere, wanting somewhere to light out for.

P LATO TELLS US that when a new music is heard the walls of the city tremble. The music in Duddy Kravitz is where in novels it always is, in the style. The groove in which the style runs is that of an exuberance, shifting into exaggeration, shifting into those distortions by which Richler achieves his comic vision of Montreal. The finest parts of the novel are those in which Richler most freely indulges the distortions: the sequence in which the documentary film director Friar produces a wedding ceremony masterpiece which views like the stream of consciousness of a lunatic, a fantasia of the contemporary mind; the entire portrait of Virgil who wants to organize the epileptics of the world and be "their Sister Kenny", as well as the more sombre portraits of Dingleman and Duddy's aunt Ida. Because Duddy has ceased to care for appearances, he moves past all of the genteel surfaces of the city and encounters an actuality in which all that is characteristically human has retreated to small corners of consciousness and life becomes a grotesque game played by bewildered grotesques. The persons who make up this gallery not only fail to invoke self but can scarcely recognize what it is to be a human being. They are like uncertain creatures in a fabulous but confusing zoo, not sure why they are there, not even sure what human forest they once inhabited.

They testify in the language of the sometimes comic, sometimes grim, distortions Richler has created to the oppressive weight of doubt, guilt, remorse, shame and regret that history has imposed upon modern man, particularly upon man in the city, where the effects of history, most closely organized, are most acutely felt. The greater the system of threats to self, the more extensive the system of appearances needed to ward off those threats, the more marked the distortions of

characteristic human need and desire. And the more marked the distortions, the more difficult the artist's task. For sensibility, that active sum of the artist's self, never does exist in relation to itself alone. It exists in relation to what *is*—actual persons, an actual city, actual lives. When the impact of accomplished history imposes distortions upon that actuality, sensibility must adjust itself to the distortions. The story of these adjustments is, I think, the most significant feature of North American fiction in our time. Long ago and far away, before World War One o'clock, Theodore Dreiser could look at the world with direct eyes. Characteristic human impulses of love, sorrow, hope, fear, existed in the actual world as love, sorrow, hope, fear; and Dreiser could direct his powerful sensibility into representation which was, as they say, "like life". But after World War One, in *The Great Gatsby*, possibly the most significant of the between-wars novels, there is open recognition of a distorted actuality necessitating a re-ordering of sensibility, one which both *Gatsby* and Fitzgerald fail to achieve.

Since World War Two the need for adjustment has become even more marked, simply because the distortions have become more pronounced. In *Duddy Kravitz*, Richler follows closely in the groove of Duddy's exuberance and on out into the exaggerations and distortions which make up his adjustment to actual Montreal. By doing so he is able to achieve an authentic relationship to life in that city—Duddy's dream of Caliban along the drear streets of Zoo. In this Richler is at one with the considerable group of contemporary writers—call them mugs, call them angry, call them beat—who all are seeking in their art those re-adjustments which will permit them to relate their sensibilities to what actually is. History has had and continues to have her say. These writers are trying to answer back. If the vision which Richler achieves in answer to history jars upon our sensibilities, that is because we have all heard of Prospero's cloud capped towers and gorgeous palaces. Yet, if the style which conveys the vision twangles from glib to brash, from colloquial to obscene, that is because the true North American tone, at long past World War Two o'clock, is much closer to that of Caliban than ever it has been to that of Prospero whose magic was a European magic, long sunk from sight, and whose daughter and her beau and their world are out of fashion like old tunes or like the lovers on Keats' urn, maybe forever but address unknown. The brave new world toward which Duddy's self quickens is the lake property he covets throughout the novel and finally possesses. When he dives in, seeking a rebirth, he scrapes bottom. But he doesn't care, he doesn't care, he doesn't care. Which is why the mug can make with the music.

D. H. Lawrence contended that in the visions of art a relatively finer vision is

substituted for the relatively cruder visions extant. But in North America, as I hope this restricted study at least partially confirms, finer is relatively crude, because frequently untrue, and crude can be relatively fine. All too often, in fiction as in life, those pretensions which we seek out because they make us fine provide false furnishings for the actual house in which we live. This fine is crude. Duddy, who would not know a pretension if he met one, wanders for this reason by accident and mostly unaware into the actual house. His crude is relatively fine. True, there are no gods hovering over Duddy's lake, no grandiose hotel, no summer camp for children. There is only old mother North America with her snow hair, her mountain forehead, her prairie eyes, and her wolf teeth, her wind songs and her vague head of old Indian memories. And what has she to do with Duddy Kravitz? A lot, I think. For when the house is repossessed the gods come back—snow gods, dust gods, wind gods, wolf gods—but life gods too. And life is the value. When history conspires against life, ruining the house, life will fight back in the only way it can, by not caring. Heavy, heavy doesn't hang over Duddy's head. And that is his value.

Snow melts away. Mountains can be very beautiful. Wheat is growing on the prairies. And in the dark forest beside the hidden lakes the deer are standing, waiting. So turn off the neon, tune out the noise, and place Duddy in the foreground of the scene. Since life is the value, let blood melt snow, and place David Caanan beside him. Strike a match to light Mrs. Bentley a path through the wolf-wind night with its dust-grit teeth until she appears standing beside Duddy and David. Smooth over that bashed-in face, those cauliflowered ears, and let Highland Archie MacNeil, strongest man in the world, appear. For this reader it is these four who emerge from the novels considered as crude with the true crudeness of the place, and by this token most fine, most worth close consideration by those who take the visions of fiction as a decisive mode of relatedness to the actual house in which we live. And of these four, it is Mrs. Bentley in her utter absence of pretentiousness and Duddy in his utter absence of pretentiousness who most effectively and convincingly come forward and take their awkward North American bows. At which point, close out the scene.

NEW CANADIAN PLAYS PRESENTED

Philip Stratford

IN A SEASON dedicated to the young Shakespeare, the Stratford Festival presented two plays by young Canadian authors, staged in the Avon Theatre by two promising Canadian directors, and acted by some of the younger members of the regular Festival cast. The plays were third and fourth prize-winners in the *Globe and Mail*—Stratford Festival playwriting contest of 1959: *The Teacher* by John Gray, and *Blind Man's Buff* by Fred Euringer. Production was not guaranteed for these plays in terms of the competition, but the Festival, with that foresight and enlightened sense of risk which has characterized so much of its planning, extended its patronage to the runners-up, thus providing them with the same opportunity, on a 'workshop' scale, as will be given Donald Jack's first-place *To The Canvas Barricades* when it goes into full-dress production in the Festival theatre in 1961.

It would be hard to overestimate the importance of this project to Canadian drama. Various amateur groups have rightly encouraged Canadian playwrights in the past, but their performances, while valuable, labour under amateur limitations. Some professional productions of Canadian plays have been generously daring, but such ventures are inevitably dogged by the onus of popular success. The Festival staging, while free of pressure from the box office, could still assure finished treatment because of the professional status of actors, directors, designer and backer. The audiences for these plays, 2,100 acutely theatre-conscious members of the Festival's widespread general public, were a more representative and influential group than could be assembled for most local productions, amateur or professional. As for the playwrights, this summer they were able to test the old adage that the place to learn the craft is in the theatre. In conference with the directors, in the hard but illuminating work of rehearsal, in the agony and excite-

ment of remodelling the play-in-the-book to meet the new creative demands of the play-on-the-boards, they gained professional experience of great value.

But to say much in favour of the undertaking is not to say that either play was an artistic triumph. John Gray's *The Teacher* was ambitious but diffuse; *Blind Man's Buff* by Fred Euringer, a clever exercise in a well-worn genre. Productions of both plays, while competent, showed signs of strain, partly due to restricted casting and a cramped rehearsal schedule (all the principals were concurrently playing two other roles in Shakespearean plays), and partly to shortcomings in the scripts which could only be glossed over in a limited production period. Brian Jackson's sets were unequal: for *The Teacher* schematic but imaginative, for the Euringer play over-elaborate in some details, short on others, unexciting in both.

Yet the object of the venture was useful experiment with certain given materials, not unlimited public success, and the critic must restrict himself to recording results and speculating on the direction of future experiments. In both offices his main concern must be with the plays themselves.

The Teacher sets out to tell the story of a progressive and self-assured young Toronto man, now principal of a school in Nova Scotia, whose ambition is to reform the community of its backward and superstitious ways; how his idealism fails him when he discovers his wife's adultery; how he turns back to the folk wisdom of the Maritimers for help and that also fails him; how, at the end, he is left alone, self-banished to a small, almost inaccessible school on storm-lashed Stone Island to learn painfully whatever wisdom he can.

In these oversimplified terms the theme is a strong one, but in actual presentation its strength is dissipated in by-play, oversubtlety, and understatement. Each of the elements in the play—the creation of Eastcoast atmosphere, the treatment of the supernatural, the evocation of the teacher's Ontario past, the triangle situation, the breakdown of domestic relations—has separately so engrossed the author that he has in turn given them all full and sometimes delicate treatment without realizing that in doing so he saps the vigour of his central theme. The result is a mish-mash of impressions that could only be saved by the sacrifice of some detail and intricacy for the sake of intensity and unity. Oversimplification, in short, is an antidote that Gray might well apply.

The same is true of his treatment of character. The teacher's growing irresolution is not emphatic enough to become dramatic. A stronger lead than John Horton might have bolstered up the script, but the essential weakness was in the writing. There is a great deal of talk, of realistically vague pondering on the hero's predicament, but rather than clarify and vitalize his problem it all tends to a kind

of narcissism in muddy water which, although it may be typical of his provincial background and character, is eminently untheatrical. Among the supporting characters the Maritimers are rough-hewn enough to stand out in good relief; the others, like the hero, are of the Chekhovian type but without the underlying abandon and passion that makes Chekhov's characters.

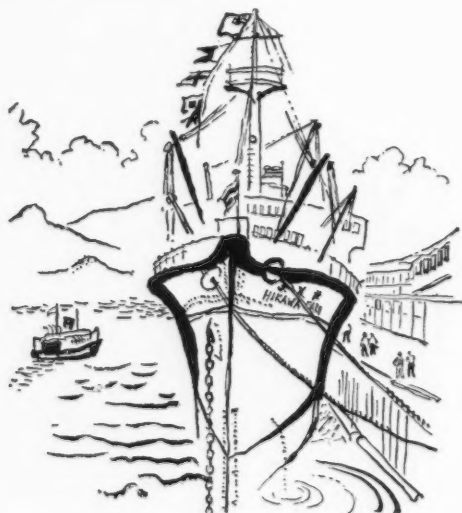
It is easy to see how the play misses its goal; it is less easy to see why Gray, who has already had two other plays produced professionally, should still be prey to such a basic dramatic weakness. What is it that makes him mistrust large effects, the straight-forward story, bold characterization? Is it timidity, hypersensitivity, or stubborn fidelity to his own experience? I think the last. It did not surprise me to hear that Canadian actors who were canvassed to take part in this play were, on the whole, cold, while English actors were enthusiastic. Gray captured so accurately the familiar half-vacuous, half-pretentious atmosphere of domestic wrangling over mid-morning coffee and fuzzy philosophizing over midnight beer that most Canadians, who tend to think of themselves as undramatic anyway, would have seen no point in presenting it on the stage. John Gray must have sensed this bashful hostility to his play even more keenly after its public showing, for now he is rewriting it and hopes for production outside Canada. The trouble may indeed lie partly outside the play, but transplantation to a more mature or more curious climate is only a way to skirt the problem. Undoubtedly Gray is also concerned to remedy the trouble inside the play. Almost all of Tennessee Williams' works—or Arnold Wesker's *Roots*—show that the problems of a provincial conscience can be treated dramatically in one's own country. Gray's own freer handling of the Maritimers, although he is a Torontonion, shows inventive promise. If he gives more licence to his imagination and is less slave to authenticity, perhaps his next will be a first-rate Canadian play.

Where *The Teacher* fails, *Blind Man's Buff* succeeds, although Euringer's success is less interesting than Gray's failure. The play is a conventional mystery with one indispensable new twist: that the hero and intended murder victim is blind. A rich Canadian author (three of the first four prizewinners manage to put the problems of Canadian arts and artists on stage), he overhears his wife and her lover planning to kill him for his money, and singlehanded though sightless he turns the tables. The theme is slight but Euringer sticks to it and makes the complexities of plot and development of character serve the single purpose of building suspense. Also his story is conceived in terms of dramatic action which does not have to be buoyed up like Gray's with split-level staging, simultaneous dialogue, interludes of song and anecdote, and other devices. Especially effective in drama-

tic terms is the scene of crisis where the killer deliberately baits his victim before striking while the author waits tensely in darkness for the just moment to check-mate his tormentor.

This is not yet a perfect exercise in the genre. The main weakness lies in characterization. The lovers, for instance, are less motivated by greed or passion than by the necessities of the plot. The butler, even if only a confidant, could have been allowed a few human idiosyncracies. The blind author himself is a little too smooth, a little too literary. Like one of his own characters, I imagine, he is not unexpected or extreme enough to become a realistic fictional creation. But despite these limitations the play remains dramatically interesting, and I believe that Fred Euringer's approach to drama—fidelity to a theatrical form before fidelity to received experience—is perhaps more fruitful for a young playwright than John Gray's reversal of the process. One can hope, nonetheless, that his next play will show that he has learnt not only from Hitchcock or Agatha Christie but also from Brecht or Beckett, O'Neill or Ionesco. Or even Shakespeare.

The playwriting contest may not have unearthed works of genius but in Gray and Euringer it has revealed two writers who should be followed with interest, and it will reveal more in the future. It has had one other important result. To all Canadian playwrights it has shown the Stratford Festival ready to put at the disposition of real talent, young Shakespeares or not, some of the best dramatic resources of the country.



ON THE PRESSING OF MAPLE LEAVES

Earle Birney

Canadian Short Stories, selected and with an introduction by Robert Weaver.
Oxford University Press. \$1.75.

IT IS NO SMALL responsibility to decide what should go into a volume of Canadian short stories for a series entitled "The World's Classics". Have we indeed any world classics, in any genre? The Oxford University Press, however, has already issued a similar anthology for the Australians and one for New Zealanders and another for Welshmen and of course several for Englishmen, under the same rubric, so that no one will blame Robert Weaver for agreeing to bestow international laurels upon Canadians as well. But where should he begin?

The short story, as a conscious art form, is no older than the nineteenth century, and its sophisticated flowering has been largely in the twentieth. An American anthologist can reach back to Poe and Hawthorne, the Founding Fathers, but we cannot boast even recognizable children of Poe or Hawthorne in our nineteenth century, any more than we can of Ambrose Bierce or Henry James, but only dubious offspring of Bret Harte and other outdated regionalists. Mr. Weaver, in his introduction, says that he has not ventured "very far back" into our

nineteenth century, and has "tried to avoid including fiction for historical or sociological reasons that [he does] not much admire on literary grounds." His selections, however, suggest that he has not tried hard enough. I cannot really believe that Robert Weaver, who has for so many years been concerned with choosing contemporary Canadian stories for presentation on C.B.C., and who has been associated with such a discriminating journal as *Tamarack Review*, does really admire "very much" or at all, as literature, the three stories from the 1890's with which he leads off his book.

Personally I must summon up a good deal of sociological and historical ardour to carry me through the hamhanded juvenility of the humour in E. W. Thomson's "Privilege of the Limits", or the freakish melodrama and dubious animal-psychologizing of Charles G. D. Roberts' story, "Strayed", or the stereotyped tear-jerking romanticism of Duncan Campbell Scott's "Paul Farlotte". These are only pressed and faded maple leaves. The trouble is that Mr. Weaver also wanted, as he reveals in his introduction, to give "a very

general impression of the development of the short story in Canada", and to do that you cannot afford the luxury of literary discrimination. You have to begin, as Desmond Pacey did in his *Book of the Canadian Story*, with Indian legends, and carry on relentlessly through Haliburton and Susanna Moodie right down to *Chatelaine*, so that the world can see how really bad we are. But if a compiler really wants to steer a shipload of Canadian stories towards international waters today, he had better first shove the whole nineteenth century crew into the stern dory and cut the painter, as Gwyn Jones did in the companion volume of *Welsh Short Stories*. Such an act of discriminating ruthlessness would have allowed Mr. Weaver to set sail in 1912 on the good ship *Mariposa*, in Stephen Leacock's "Marine Excursion of the Knights of Pythias", a selection which comes fourth in this anthology. Here at last is a story which stands up, which is as peculiarly Canadian as Oka and Rawhide and Social Credit, but which has also some hope of being international and enduring. It is a sustained mock-heroic of provinciality, witty and absurd and satirically pointed, good-humoured and observing and artfully constructed, yet almost as free and high-spirited in its effects as Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale*.

What follows is an anti-climax, and a reminder that the nineteenth century did not end with 1900, not in Canada. Frederick Philip Grove's "Snow", thought it has the power and authority which Grove brought to the depiction of natural forces on the prairies, especially in their grimmer aspects, lacks as a short story that economy and particularly that understanding of when to stop, which are essential to

the form. These are the typical failings of a rather ponderous writer fumbling in a *genre* he does not understand, the faults into which even Zola and other naturalistic novelists of the nineteenth century fell when they tried to write short stories. If Grove's tale were to be included at all, it should be placed with the school of Roberts, though it was not written until 1932; Mr. Weaver has it follow immediately after Leacock's more "contemporary" story of 1912, merely because Grove happened to have been born two years later than Leacock. This curiously festive arrangement of stories by their authors' birthdays (which could not have been imposed on Mr. Weaver by the traditions of the series, since the companion *Welsh Short Stories* orders its authors alphabetically) results in some bewildering juxtapositions. Immediately after Grove comes a piece dated 1952, by Ethel Wilson, titled "Mrs. Golightly and the First Convention", a sophisticated little satire written with that very individual charm of style and pseudo-naïve drollery which are among Mrs. Wilson's many distinguishing and distinguished gifts; it is also as modern in subject as in mood, a New Yorkerish kind of story, in the best sense. I'm delighted to see it again, but it does not deserve to be sandwiched between Frederick Philip Grove and Thomas H. Raddall. The latter is represented by a piece which is not so much a classic as a classic example of how good material can be destroyed by stock characterization, slick over-writing, and the sacrifice of probability to a Victorian sentimental ending.

I cannot believe that Mr. Weaver likes this story of Raddall's. I think it is in the book because he forgot at this juncture

that his purpose was to present the best Canadian stories, and thought that it was his duty to find somehow the least worst story by one of the best-selling Canadian novelists. Mr. Weaver opens his introduction by disclaiming that there is any editorial tradition which he has been either required to follow or to explain away, but some of the museum pieces I have mentioned seem to me to be justified in his collection only on such grounds. For it is not simply a matter of the inevitable author but of the inevitable illustration. Pacey too, in his anthology published in 1947, offered Thomson's "Privilege of the Limits", Scott's "Paul Farlotte", Grove's "Snow", and Leo Kennedy's "A Priest in the Family". Indeed, if authors like Kennedy are to be represented, there is no alternative; their other tales are much worse. But knowledge that "A Priest in the Family" is the best of Kennedy does not help us to enjoy any better the phoney rhetorical fruitiness of its two-dimensional characters. I wish that Mr. Weaver, who did banish Gilbert Parker and Alan Sullivan and Norman Duncan and Marjorie Pickthall and even Mazo de la Roche, had maintained his courage long enough to cast into limbo all those stories which have appeared in earlier anthologies not because they are still good but because they were once briefly thought to be good or because their authors were good about other things.

The space Mr. Weaver would have saved he could have used to present more examples of the best writers he has available. This strategem, which seems to me a basic one in anthologizing, Mr. Weaver has admitted only once into his practise. He allows Morley Callaghan two stories,

the sole author so honoured, and for the stated reason that Callaghan "has been for more than thirty years Canada's most distinguished novelist and short story writer". If this be true of Morley Callaghan, and I do not dispute it, why limit him to two? Mr. Weaver, I am sure, knows Callaghan's work well, and so knows that he could have added a half dozen other tales as satisfying as the two he has chosen. Far better to have presented all these to the appraising eye of the searcher for our world's classics, and to have dispensed with other writers, past or present, whose artistry falls so far below Callaghan's as to prove embarrassing to them when they appear in the same book with him. Personally I would swap W. O. Mitchell's "The Owl and the Bens", and all its windy, plausible ladies'-magazine style, its *Ersatz* nature-boy, and its Dickensian comic schoolteacher, for another Callaghan, any Callaghan, or for Leacock's "Rival Churches of St. Asaph and St. Osaph", or Sinclair Ross's "One's a Heifer", or for something by Dorothy Livesay (who is not included, despite a statement in the Preface that she is). And I would throw in, or rather throw out, the Mordecai Richler story, in the bargain, for Richler, however plausible his claims to be considered as a new Canadian novelist, has not yet learned to write a short story that avoids sounding like something warmed over from the Proletcult literature of the Thirties. O Robert Weaver, you didn't have to be kind to so many people!

I, however, should be much kinder to Robert Weaver, and make clear that I think the majority of his selections—there are after all twenty-six of them—are well chosen indeed, and fairly representative

of the contemporary scene. Certainly I have found it a delight to re-read, through this collection, Ralph Gustafson's sensitive "The Pigeon" and Malcolm Lowry's "The Bravest Boat", a rare piece of stylistic magic, and Hugh Garner's heart-and-mind-breaking tale of "One, Two, Three little Indians" (though all have been previously anthologized), and the tales of Ringuet and Roger Lemelin and Anne Hébert—Mr. Weaver has, rightly, I think, included these three translations from the French of Canada. I have also been grateful to encounter for the first time the young writer Alice Munro and her mordant and moving "Time of Death", and to read a richly sad and comic story of Irving Layton's I had somehow missed, "Vacation

in La Voiselle". Mr. Layton is shortly to bring out a selection of his own tales; if they prove to contain characters with the convincing quality of Madame Tipue, it will be a notable book.

Ultimately, perhaps, the fundamental service which Robert Weaver has rendered us in this collection is not the fixing of a tradition, or the overcoming of one, for he has done neither, but the awakening of readers, in Canada and elsewhere, to the existence of at least a dozen living short-storyists, both old and young, who understand their craft and have achieved their private vision and voice. Partly through the encouragement of such anthologies as this, some one of these writers may yet produce a world's classic of his own.

MOVING BEYOND BORDERS

John Bilsland

The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse. Ed. A. J. M. Smith. Oxford University Press. \$6.00.

THE APPEARANCE of any representative anthology of Canadian poetry must be an event of some importance in the Canadian literary world: with a very few exceptions our poets seldom enjoy the recognition of repeated publication. When, moreover, an anthology of this poetry appears under the distinguished aegis of the Oxford University Press one cannot avoid an immediate sense of satisfaction that Canadian poetry has broken beyond its national confines to take its place—whatever that may be—in the

larger sphere of the English-speaking world.

The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse is a valuable collection. With cumulative force it reminds us of the very considerable worth of much of our poetry, and of its range in material, treatment, and effect. And it renders accessible—in convenient, pleasing, and inexpensive form—a great body of work which would otherwise be unobtainable outside libraries. It is particularly noteworthy for its inclusion of a large number of poems by

French-Canadian writers, and these works are not merely relegated to an appendix—as rather awkward bastard relatives one scarcely cares to acknowledge—but are given full recognition, appearing side-by-side with their English chronological cousins.

But for all its values—and these are great and several—*The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* is disappointing in certain very important respects. The editor of the collection, A. J. M. Smith, has obviously set himself the task of offering as fully representative a selection of Canadian verse as his space would allow. In itself the coverage he has sought seems wholly admirable. But that coverage has been purchased only at great expense: it has sometimes cost Professor Smith the judicious exercise of his critical taste, and it has prevented anything like a satisfying full treatment of a single worthwhile Canadian poet.

The anthologist always, of course, faces the great problem of deciding the relative importance of inclusiveness and taste. The compiler of a selected edition of Tennyson must inevitably resign himself either to including *Dora* because it represents an important side of Tennyson's nature as a poet, or rejecting it because as a poem it is a feeble thing. Professor Smith has quite evidently encountered this problem frequently in selecting works for inclusion in *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*. One is particularly aware of this in the early pages of the collection. Here one finds pieces by writers such as Standish O'Grady, Alexander McLachlan, and John Hunter Duvar. Historically these men have perhaps some interest, but their value as poets would seem—from Professor

Smith's examples—to be very slight indeed. Professor Smith declares of O'Grady and McLachlan that "Their work has a solidity and tang that is emphasized and sharpened by the absence of polish and literary sophistication." Perhaps so, but the solidity and tang are scarcely evident in these doggerel lines of McLachlan:

Old England is eaten by knaves,
Yet her heart is all right at the core,
May she ne'er be the mother of slaves,
Nor a foreign foe land on her shore.

I love my own country and race,
Nor lightly I fled from them both,
Yet who would remain in a place
Where there's too many spoons for the
broth?

With regard to Duvar, Professor Smith makes no critical claims at all for him as a poet, and one can, therefore, only remain in complete bewilderment with regard to the inclusion of three excerpts from *De Roberval: a Drama*. The first of these begins thus:

Ha! are there wood-ghosts in this solitude,
Such as we read of in *roman de rou*?
No, it is Dian, or Diana's maid,
And fully armed with arrow, belt and bow,
Though tricked out in a somewhat antic
guise.

By heathen Venus, what a shape it has!
If nymph it be, and not an airy form . . .

The harmful result of including stuff by writers like these is not so much, however, that it reflects on the critical judgment of the editor, as that it further limits the already-small space available to worthwhile writers. A poet like Wilfred Watson is scantily represented by two and a half pages, the same space given over to Duvar's *De Roberval*. Surely one could do without *De Roberval* if its sacri-

fice would make room for Watson's *Canticle of Darkness*, even as the loss of much of the work of other early Canadians would seem slight if it allowed fuller treatment of poets like Anne Marriott, Margaret Avison, and Jay Macpherson. One wonders if perhaps the time has not come for editors of Canadian poetry to recognize that dead things are often better left unresurrected. Most of the poems written by eighteenth and nineteenth century Englishmen are now decently interred; the great achievements alone survive. Why, then, continue to unearth poetic corpses because they happen to be Canadian? Even Canadian corpses can take up valuable living space.

The poems—living and dead—which Professor Smith offers in his anthology are introduced in a lengthy essay in which the editor surveys the history of Canadian poetry, both English and French, from its beginnings to the present time. Like the collection of poems which follows, this prefatory essay has the value of range: it moves competently over a vast area of time and work. But like the collection, too, it has the weakness of trying to cover too much ground, and in its attempt to be all-inclusive it becomes merely superficial. It often reads, in fact, like some histories of English literature which do little more than provide a student with convenient epithets.

Nowhere is this superficiality more disturbingly evident than in the conclusion of the essay. Here Professor Smith seeks to establish the "distinctive quality" of Canadian poetry, and he writes:

. . . the Canadian poet has one advantage—an advantage that derives from his position of separateness and semi-isolation. He can draw upon French, British, and Ameri-

can sources in language and literary convention; at the same time he enjoys a measure of detachment that enables him to select and adapt what is relevant and useful. This gives to contemporary Canadian poetry in either language a distinctive quality—its eclectic detachment.

The expression *eclectic detachment* sounds well; it seems to suggest a learned objectivity, the capacity in our poets to draw freely on diverse cultures and traditions. But one wonders if the very attractiveness of the fine expression has not misled Professor Smith. Surely a very marked quality of much of the best Canadian poetry is its intensely personal note. Many of our poets are highly derivative, but writers like A. M. Klein, Anne Wilkinson, and Irving Layton have achieved a decidedly personal utterance, not particularly eclectic, and not at all detached. Klein draws on a cultural heritage, it is true, but it is his own immediate heritage as a Canadian Jew. *Eclectic detachment* would seem much more the mark of the American-British T. S. Eliot than of perhaps any Canadian poet with the one possible exception of James Reaney.

In both the introductory essay and the collection of poems there are, therefore, serious flaws: *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* is by no means a perfect anthology of Canadian poetry—nor, of course, would Professor Smith claim it was. But despite its weaknesses the collection is an important landmark in the publication of Canadian poetry. Probably the greatest service Professor Smith has done the reader is that he has brought together a body of work sufficiently large and sufficiently representative that one can see the achievement of Canadian poets in some per-

spective. Much of our poetry is strongly imitative: one can easily detect the influence of the English neo-classicists, of Wordsworth, Keats, and Tennyson, and of Eliot and Dylan Thomas. But at the same time one can see the rise of individual writers who—whatever their cultural debts may be—speak as poets deserving serious consideration in their own right. In studies of Canadian literature one often meets Professor Smith's stress on the Canadian identity: one hears much of the isolated nature of the Canadian, and the way in which his isolation marks his poetry; and one hears of the double heritage of Canada, Cana-

dians being able to draw on the best of the old world and the new, and to fuse both into something unique. Whether or not these matters are as important as some commentators would have us believe is rather a doubtful question. It may probably be more significant that some of Canada's poets have clearly risen above the level on which their Canadianism affects our attitude towards them. James Reaney is a worthwhile poet by any standards. So, too, are Jay Macpherson, Irving Layton, and A. M. Klein, and a surprisingly large number of other poets represented in Professor Smith's anthology.

RECENT VERSE

Norman Endicott

FRED COGSWELL. *Lost Dimension*. Outposts Publications. 50 cents.

KENNETH MCROBBIE. *Eyes Without a Face*. Gallery Editions, the Isaacs Gallery. \$2.00.

MARGARET AVISON. *Winter Sun and Other Poems*. University of Toronto Press. \$2.50.

A PAMPHLET of poems is apt to get less than a pamphlet share of a brief review, even though it might be a little box of jewels. *Lost Dimension*, by Fred Cogswell, is a collection of smooth, round, and something less than precious stones. But although lacking in colour they are not without some interest, and in the best—for instance the title poem—there is a little density. The human condition is seen, genuinely enough, in traditional opposition: “root bestiality” “groping though its lair” that “the haloed tree may bloom and be fair”, the “thistle of sin”, Eden and another garden with

closed gates, “sweet chastity” a lamb “flayed of its woolly white”, and so on.

In contrast, the pieces in *Eyes Without a Face* seem to me often rather showy, sometimes clever, and rarely poetic. One of the most characteristic, “Homage to the Coast and Rexroth”, was “written for jazz accompaniment to vary an otherwise conventional poetry reading” at the Isaacs Gallery in Toronto, and while the other poems are less jazz-arty and less localized, the general tone or convention of the longer ones is apt to be that of the familiar and self-conscious meditation or soliloquy or announcement for one's

friends. Mr. McRobbie does not deserve (either way perhaps) the rhetoric he gives Rexroth when he asks why we should care what the latter is saying and answers

Because you go down on your knees to the
broken noses
in the silent ring of the Beat Generation
take the count along with them
and weep for the cauliflower ears of
youth.

He has not gone far enough in that direction; but he sometimes sounds as if he wished he could.

Yet he is perhaps most himself when exploring his own consciousness and attempting to come to rhetorical terms with the new scientific universe, mechanical city life, and human consciousness itself. This he does in a plethora of biological and mechanical metaphors, usually striking, sometimes fanciful, but with a very mixed total effect: verbal ingenuity in at best only half-appropriate and drawn-out analogy and comparison. A telescopic figure becomes

Screw, counterweight, barrel, emulsion, lens
aimed at light years' millions of vapour
pick out faint characters
by a cloud
(no bigger)
stroked from
vision's
guitar
of black lead

"Blastoff" is typographically shaped like a rocket and has a red fume of hair, an incendiary scalp and Canaveral shoulders roaring from a thunder dress. "Serenade to the Queen City" is a long series of metaphors, some of them no doubt mockingly "forced" by the poet. But is it not perhaps after all too easy to write lines like

where the oxygen turbine stands the night
on its head
spinning awake physiologies of work
O rising skulls yawn in smoke cloud
civilization

where the lakeshore bleeds autos along
burning veins of gas
into the Bank of Commerce, lights come
on floor
by floor like a rising tide in the standing
vessels

"As I Start", a poem somewhat reminiscent of Dylan Thomas, suggests what a more limited and personal (even if private) symbolism might do; as it is, there is altogether too much mere juxtaposition and exclamation, too little coherence or pattern. Most of the poems are in free verse, with a good deal of parallelism and alliteration; the staccato rhythms may have the inflections of an individual voice.

Winter Sun and Other Poems, the first collection of poems by Margaret Avison, seems to me very consistently poetry, as well as ironic wit and reserved but strongly individual feeling. There is indeed a range of craftsmanship which encompasses various forms from sonnet, couplet and quatrain to irregular rhyme and free verse. I do not know whether the use of free verse and older traditional forms is a matter of chronology, but I should suspect not, and also suspect that the occasional absence of consistency within a poem, though possibly a fault, is not just lack of care or energy.

In the second issue of *Canadian Literature* Professor Milton Wilson gave a lucid and partly thematic analysis of some of Miss Avison's poems—quite a number of these she has not included in the present volume—but I confess that I do not find her work easy either to understand or

characterize. This collection is arranged, we are told on the presumably inspired jacket, for readers who like to skim through a book when they first take it up, and would rather find their own groupings than have the poems clearly grouped for them. The two main themes are said to be weather and the attempt to come to human terms with our social institutions.

But "Weather", and other similar words, have for Miss Avison a psychological and cosmic meaning, even though many of her best lines are very sensuously particular. She moves very easily and rapidly from the confines of a city room (where she is often at or near the window) to all room; her poem "Intra-Political" is "an exercise in Political Astronomy"; "Tennis", though technical in its descriptive vocabulary, ends with the "metaphysical" lines

Playing is musicked gravity, the pair
Score liquid Euclids in foolscaps of air.

These lines seem rather forced. Miss Avison's desire to thicken her material, rapidly draw out interconnections, give it an overlay or *montage* treatment, is naturally not always successful. But if she writes some lines that seem cold-bloodedly complicated, in her best passages the blending of the visual and the conceptual is very successful; a simple example might be the first two stanzas of "Civility a Bogey, or Two Centuries of Canadian Cities":

Chinashop at seaborde
a speckled chinashop
in the hard-wheat flat-land
a red-sand chinashop
in pine-scrub:
and in between the granite cup dangled
by the pump.

Came big bull buildings,
sharded and shoaled
even the moustache-cup,
held a board meeting,
stood, or sat smoking,
cratered the moonlight.
Mouseholes rustled with paper
and by then Hallowe'en was a prance of
reeking horses.

For those who prefer standing on the actual ground with images of sense, there are many vividly observed lines:

Sedges and wild rice
Chase rivy pewter. The astonished cin-
ders quake
With rhizomes

("Snow")

or

All nests, with all moist downy young
Blinking and gaping daylight; and all lambs
Four-braced in straw, shivering and mild
("Birth Day")

Miss Avison is an intellectual poet in that she demands a constant alertness of mind. Her "philosophy of life", when she expresses it directly, as in a number of poems, is for the most part an elaboration of the positions expressed with concentration in the first lines of "Snow":

Nobody stuffs the world in at your eyes,
The optic heart must venture: a jail-break
And re-creation.

In "Intra-Political" she ends (in a very uncommon literary vein) with

(George Herbert—and he makes it plain—
Guest at this same transfiguring board
Did sit and eat)

but in the poem the transfiguring board of the world is not seen through the eyes of revealed religion any more than in "The Fallen, Fallen World". The human groups in the latter are the Revolutionaries, the Idealists, the Learned. It might seem that the Learned are nearest to the author, though sound and sense are for

them "qualities of time/Where meaning
mocks itself in many echoes". But the
physical sense of the world comes to the
poet's rescue:

Yet where the junco flits the sun comes
still

Remote and chilly, but as gold,
And all the mutinous in their dungeons stir,
And sense the tropics, and unwitting wait.
Since Lucifer, waiting is all
A rebel can. And slow the south returns.

A wintry sun. And Miss Avison is one
of our most interesting poets.

LE POINT DE VUE ARTISTIQUE

Gerard Bessette

GERARD TOUGAS. *Histoire de la Littérature Canadienne-Française*. Les Presses Universitaires de France, Paris. 15 N.F. (\$3.00).

CE VOLUME marquera une date dans l'histoire de nos lettres. Gérard Tougas est en effet le premier critique canadien-français qui, en étudiant l'ensemble de notre production littéraire, adopte franchement le point de vue artistique, ne s'embarrasse pas de considérations moralisantes ni—dans la mesure du possible—de considérations historiques pour apprécier la valeur de nos écrivains. Cela devrait aller de soi, je le sais bien. On ne songerait même pas à souligner pareille "singularité" dans un milieu plus évolué que le nôtre. Mais jusqu'à présent l'historien littéraire canadien-français s'est toujours doublé d'un censeur, d'un moralisateur dont les jugements sont *ipso facto* sujets à caution. Si, comme l'affirme Tougas, "la critique tend à épouser la courbe d'une littérature", si "plus une littérature s'élève, plus elle appelle la critique qui lui est complémentaire . . ." (p. 36), la publication de son volume nous paraîtra doublement encourageante.

Tougas ne pouvait, de toute évidence, négliger complètement le point de vue historique: c'eût été éliminer de son *Histoire* toute notre littérature d'avant 1900, à l'exception de Garneau et, peut-être, de Crémazie et de Fréchette. Il lui fallait donc faire un compromis: bannir de son étude les auteurs qui, même pour l'époque, paraissent médiocres, mais en retenir d'autres qui, s'ils écrivaient de nos jours, ne mériteraient pas qu'on les mentionne. C'est dans cet éclairage qu'il faut juger le volume de Tougas: autrement on ne comprendrait pas qu'il étudie Arthur Buies assez longuement et passe Asselin et Fournier sous silence; qu'il consacre trois pages à Laure Conan et cinq lignes à Roger Viau, deux pages à Pamphile Lemay, poète, et cinq lignes à Desaulniers. On s'étonne davantage qu'il ait jugé bon de tirer Eudore Eventurel d'un oubli bien mérité en citant, pour appuyer ce choix, un poème d'une rare platitude. Mais ne le chicanons pas sur des détails.

Tout comme les auteurs étudiés, c'est

à partir du XXI^{ème} siècle que l'*Histoire* de Tougas revêt un intérêt particulier pour le lecteur contemporain. Il faut le féliciter d'avoir inclus dans son ouvrage, à côté d'écrivains déjà consacrés comme Panneton, Gabrielle Roy, Thériault et Alain Grandbois, des auteurs plus récents comme Richard, Filiatrault, Boisvert et Pilon, dont on ne sait pas encore s'ils survivront. Son choix, naturellement, ne ralliera pas tous les suffrages. Comment s'en étonner? Tougas fait ici, en partie du moins, travail de pionnier, et la postérité ne ratifiera sans doute pas tous ses jugements. Mais ce triage, ce déblaiement s'imposaient. Ils reposent d'ailleurs sur une lecture attentive des œuvres, guidée par un jugement d'une singulière perspicacité. Je ne saurais citer un seul auteur de quelque envergure qui ait échappé à son attention.

Quoiqu'elle soit toujours textuelle, la méthode qu'il emploie pour analyser nos romanciers contemporains laisse parfois à désirer. Il énumère les œuvres de chaque auteur par ordre chronologique, en donne un résumé succinct et porte sur chacune un jugement sommaire. C'est là un procédé qui confine, à l'occasion, au journalisme. On ne lui en ferait pas grief s'il savait toujours ramasser ensuite ses commentaires épars en un jugement synthétique où il dégagerait clairement les lignes de force, les thèmes principaux et les imperfections de l'œuvre dans son ensemble. Tel n'est pas toujours le cas. Il nous laisse parfois indécis sur la conception qu'il se fait de telle ou telle œuvre, ou même sur la valeur qu'il lui attribue. Par exemple, il parle des "grands thèmes" de Langevin sans nous préciser leur nature. Il accorde une place de choix à Robert Elie et pourtant sa critique indi-

que qu'il le considère comme un romancier de deuxième ordre. Je ne l'en blâme pas, mais dans ce cas il aurait fallu reléguer Elie à la fin du chapitre avec les auteurs qui figurent en petits caractères. On souhaiterait aussi pour nos meilleurs romanciers, comme Gabrielle Roy, Ringuelet et Thériault, une étude plus fouillée où figureraient de moins parcimonieuses remarques sur le style et la technique. Résignons-nous à laisser ce soin à des ouvrages plus spécialisés et soulignons que, par contre, Tougas fait figure de novateur en analysant dans son volume les principaux romanciers français—Bugnet, Ouvrard, Constantin-Weyer, Marie le Franc, etc.—qui, à l'instar de Louis Hémon, ont écrit sur le Canada.

Les réserves que je viens de faire au sujet des romanciers ne s'appliquent pas aux poètes. En poésie, la tentation est moins grande d'analyser tel ou tel recueil isolément, car ils ne forment pas des entités aussi nettement délimitées, aussi indépendantes que les romans. Aussi Tougas considère-t-il chaque poète dans son ensemble, quitte à étayer à l'occasion ses jugements par de brèves citations dont il souligne les qualités ou les défauts.

Quant à l'importance qu'il assigne à nos différents poètes, elle ne s'éloigne guère des opinions communément acceptées. Grandbois, Saint-Denis-Garneau, Anne Hébert et Rina Lasnier viennent en tête, suivis par ceux que Tougas appelle les "poètes de la coupure". C'est là une appellation hasardeuse, car il faudra attendre quelques années pour savoir si Pilon, Giguère ou Boisvert "coupent" vraiment et se différencient en profondeur de Grandbois ou d'Anne Hébert. Leur supposée révolte reste en effet extrê-

mement obscure. Elle est peut-être moins authentique, moins radicale qu'on ne le suppose; elle ressemble fort à celle des surréalistes français de 1920. La postérité y sera-t-elle sensible? Il est permis d'en douter.

Tougas ne change pas de méthode pour étudier nos historiens: il s'en tient, autant que possible, à l'aspect littéraire. Après avoir relevé, par exemple, "les déformations, . . . les grossissements" que l'abbé Groulx "fait subir aux faits", il reconnaît que "cet historien partial . . . est pourtant grand par son éloquence" (p. 125), et il lui accorde autant d'importance qu'à Thomas Chapais, dont il souligne le "conservatisme religieux et politique" et l'éloquence "un peu désuète" (pp. 120-121). Bien qu'il reconnaisse en Frégault l'historien "le plus éminent" qui se soit "acquis une réputation depuis la seconde Guerre mondiale" (p. 232), il soutient que Rumilly, "le seul artiste parmi les historiens contemporains" (p. 238), lui est supérieur au point de vue de l'évocation, de l'esthétique. Je n'ai pas assez pratiqué Rumilly pour savoir si Tougas a raison, mais ceux qui tenteront d'infirmer son jugement en invoquant uniquement la supériorité scientifique et méthodologique de Frégault prouveront qu'ils n'ont pas compris. Autant vaudrait essayer de démontrer que *Bonheur d'Occasion*, par exemple, l'emporte sur *Aaron* parce que Gabrielle Roy y serre la réalité de plus près.

Par la force des choses, Tougas consacre très peu d'espace à la philosophie. Il se contente d'expliquer pourquoi chez nous "elle reste à être fondée" (p. 248), pourquoi un "air de byzantinisme . . . s'attache aux études philosophiques au Canada français" (p. 249). La raison en

est simple: nos soi-disant philosophes ne font pas de véritables recherches, mais s'attaquent à des problèmes dont ils connaissent *d'avance* la solution. Ne nous étonnons donc pas si "le thomisme canadien n'a aucune chance de déboucher sur l'extérieur . . ." (p. 249).

C'est lorsqu'il étudie nos critiques et présente des aperçus généraux sur notre langue, nos relations littéraires avec la France, l'analogie de notre situation avec celles de la Belgique et de la Suisse romande que Tougas nous donne ses meilleures pages. Qu'il s'agisse d'assommer élégamment les nombreux béotiens qui, sous prétexte de critique littéraire, veulent nous donner des leçons de catéchisme; de nous présenter un jugement lucide et nuancé sur les mérites de Mgr Camille Roy; de mettre en valeur la finesse et la clairvoyance de Louis Danton, Tougas est toujours à la hauteur de sa tâche. Il est symptomatique qu'il ait fallu un critique canadien né en dehors de la province de Québec pour rendre justice au Père Seers, réfugié, lui, aux Etats-Unis afin d'échapper à l'étouffement qui le guettait chez nous.

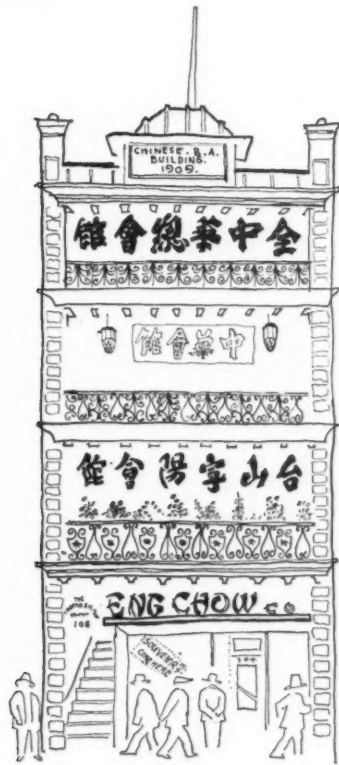
Cependant, les passages les plus originaux, les plus profonds de Tougas sont peut-être ceux qu'il consacre à ce que, faute d'un autre terme, j'appellerai la littérature comparée. Il ne s'agit pas, en effet, de littérature comparée au sens strict, car la littérature canadienne ne jouit pas encore vis-à-vis de la France d'assez d'autonomie pour que l'on puisse parler d'"influence étrangère". D'autre part, ni les écrivains belges, ni ceux de la Suisse romande n'ont exercé d'influence sur les nôtres. Pourtant, nos relations intellectuelles avec la France, notre attitude envers elle, les analogies qui existent

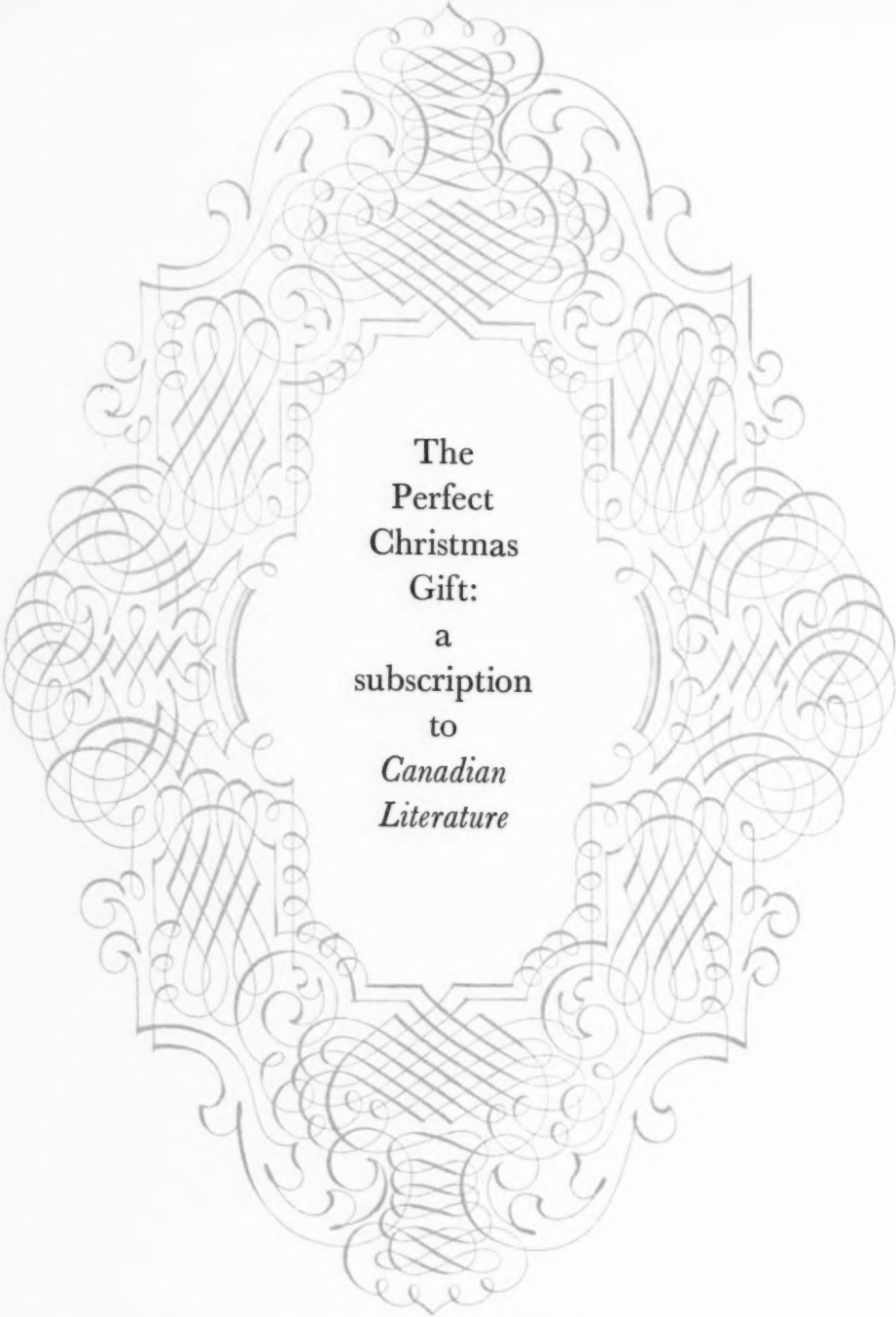
entre notre situation et celles de la Belgique et de la Suisse sont des questions d'un extrême intérêt qui ont été à peine effleurées ou totalement négligées par nos critiques. Les trop brèves considérations de Tougas nous en paraissent d'autant plus précieuses. Espérons qu'il les développera dans un prochain ouvrage.

Un mot enfin sur son style, qui est d'une élégance, d'une clarté, d'une souplesse qui ne se démentent à peu près jamais. Il faudrait vraiment chercher la petite bête—un exercice favori de nos critiques, toujours plus sévères à l'égard de la langue de nos écrivains que de celle des Français—pour relever ici et là quel-

ques défaillances ou quelques fautes d'attention. La conclusion de Tougas en particulier, qui traite des rapports littéraires entre le Canada et la France, contient des pages qui figureront certainement dans nos futures anthologies.

Même si Gérard Tougas déclare sans sa préface qu'une histoire comme la sienne ne peut rendre service qu'un certain temps, je suis sûr que, non seulement "elle contribuera (. . .) à faire connaître au Canada et à l'étranger les meilleurs auteurs canadiens" (p. 13), mais qu'elle s'inscrira dans l'histoire de nos lettres comme un jalon de première importance.





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FRAGMENTS OF PERSONALITY

HUGH MACLENNAN. *Scotchman's Return and Other Essays*. Macmillan. \$4.00.

"A PERSONAL ESSAY", writes Hugh MacLennan in the Author's Note to *Scotchman's Return and Other Essays*, "is a little fragment of yourself; a mood or cluster of ideas which somehow have emerged from yourself. It is the friendliest form of writing I know." By and large, the essays in this collection fulfill the terms of the author's definition, though the "fragments" are not uniformly "friendly". Certainly they go far toward convincing this reader at least that the personal essay, as a literary genre, is not, contrary to popular belief, extinct.

Mr. MacLennan's models may be inferred from his confession that he has become increasingly addicted to "the form in which Lamb excelled all others in England, and Thoreau all others in the United States". It is not surprising, therefore, that the selections in this volume tend to fall into two main categories: intimate essays of personal opinion and reminiscence, and serious, less informal essays of social comment. To my mind the essays according to Lamb are, with one or two exceptions, more interesting and more successful examples of the form than those according

to Thoreau, but in both categories there is considerable diversity of subject matter and of tone and in both the skills of the essayist are enriched by those of the novelist.

Particularly noteworthy in this connection are the vivid thumb-nail characterizations of the taxi-drivers who appear briefly in a number of the essays, sometimes serving as sounding boards for the author's views, sometimes as vehicles of social comment. They also serve as a foil for the author's gnawing anxiety about the future of a society devoted exclusively to the "production, distribution and consumption" of material goods. One cannot despair utterly of a world in which taxi drivers, with the authority conferred by the experience of their craft, deliver such downright pronouncements as: "This TeeVee ain't gonna last much longer. People all over is getting very weary indeed of Tee-Vee." Or "What's history but psychology, and what's psychology but the ree-searches of Sigmund Freud? Toynbee writes history like Freud was not in it. That's what's the trouble with Toynbee."

Among the personal essays, the moods of which range from the nostalgia of "Scotchman's Return" and "Oxford Revisited" through the tongue-in-cheek satire on gastronomic tastes, national and personal, in "By their Foods", to a sorrowful Jeremiad on the divorce between youth and poetry in "Sunset and Evening Star", my own preference is for "The Secret and Voluptuous Life of a Rose-Grower". Here Mr. MacLennan is most successfully Lamb-like, while yet remaining completely himself, a delightful combination illustrated by the opening paragraph of the essay.

This moist, cool summer with intermittent washes of sunshine has been poor for grain and vacations, exasperating to tennis players, and cruel to mothers who count on summer as a time when the children are out of the house. It has given the cicadas little to sing about, it has sent snails to the lawns and slugs to the lettuce, it has darkened the moon and ruined the haystacks for country lovers. But to one species of lovely life this moist summer has been the kindest I ever remember in this part of the world. Never have the roses been so good.

As a literary device, the analogy between women and roses antedates by centuries even so venerable a work as *The Romance of the Rose*, but Mr. MacLennan's use of it to talk of roses rather than of women is new. In this brief memoir of the adventures of a horticultural Casanova, he demonstrates a subtlety of characterization not always evident in his novels, powers of sensuous evocation and of aesthetic discrimination. Though it is difficult to forgive him for preferring "Peace" to "Helen Traubel", no rose-grower can fail to appreciate the accuracy and the judiciousness of such evaluations as the following:

There are roses—increasingly more of them every year—which resemble the big, sun-ripened girls who disport themselves on the beaches of Southern California, drink an excess of orange juice and seem perfect until you get to know them: girls with faultless bosoms, waistlines and thighs, and only one limitation: They don't seem to mean much. Yet they are very pleasant to have around, all of them are friendly and they possess an advantage that great ones lack; a man doesn't mind giving them now and then to his friends.

The longest essay in the volume, "The Classical Tradition and Education", was originally a public lecture. In spite of the threadbare topic and the difficulties of effectively reshaping the spoken into the

written word, this is perhaps the most successful of the essays of social comment. It is serious in purpose, well argued, and outspoken but not truculent in expression. It is remarkably free from the self-deception and wishful thinking which pervade so many public utterances on the subject. It says forthrightly what needs to be said and usually isn't—that the present emphasis on popularity and expediency in education is cheating our children and that our children are becoming increasingly aware of the fact and increasingly frustrated by it. The losses incurred in the total abandonment of humanistic values in education are four: the loss of belief that life is a coherent experience; the loss of the individual and collective self-confidence that our forefathers knew; the loss of respect for truth as something valuable and unassailable in itself, and the loss of the belief that education cannot be easy, that it does not lead to material security but to struggle, and that at its best it is a pilgrim's progress.

Readers familiar with other examples of Mr. MacLennan's writings on the future of literature and the rewards of authorship in Canada may be surprised at the generally optimistic tone of many of the critical essays in this book, in particular, "Literature in a New Country". No doubt this mellowing of attitude is due in part to the success of *The Watch that Ends the Night*, the personal implications of which are recorded with charm and childlike delight, insofar as such qualities can be expected from a dour and self-deprecating "Scotchman", in "New York, New York".

It is a pity that the editing of this volume falls so far below the level of its

content and style. The book is badly in need of cutting. Some of the essays, particularly those on education and on literature, are not only redundant in content but verbally repetitious. In addition, the frequency of obvious typographical errors indicates sloppy proof-reading. Someone, either the author, or the editor if Mr. MacLennan did not do the job himself, should have taken more pains and spent more time in preparing the manuscript for publication and checking the proofs. The book deserves it.

MARION B. SMITH

IRISHMAN'S LUCK

BRIAN MOORE. *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*.
Little, Brown. \$4.00.

IN BRIAN MOORE'S *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* another Irish romantic takes it on the chin, goes down for the count and comes up a sadder if only slightly wiser realist. The battle takes place in Montreal, but as readers of *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* and *The Feast of Lupercal* might expect, when Ginger Coffey hits the deck it tastes as much of the ould sod as of the new world and it might as well be a truculent priest out of his childhood counting I-Told-You-So over him. As Yeats' poems, O'Casey's autobiography and Joyce's entire work have long since demonstrated, there is no easy winning out over the peculiar bitterness of Irish childhood. There is no winning at all for Ginger, who in defeat becomes the penitent self-flagellant, almost ready to plead as many crimes as there are laws. But if his bad luck begins

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in an Irish backward of time, it culminates in the Canadian present, and the opponent who flattens him (and many another) is Montreal.

Let us say that a novel is an arrangement of people, places and circumstances designed to release some corresponding inner arrangement—perceptions, feelings, beliefs—which the novelist needs and wants to communicate. Here Moore gains his force by an interplay between a hard, realistic head and a sympathetic middle. The Montreal in which Ginger puts up a losing fight for his romantic pretensions is projected from Moore's hard head as a reinforced concrete cathedral to the Almighty Dollar. From the middle, Moore projects his sympathy for all sufferers like Ginger who are unable to cope with the deadly fact that in such a cathedral *pray* usually means *prey*. The priest of his childhood could not convince Ginger that his personal pretensions would eventually defeat him, but the priesthood of money spells it out with repeated blows to his self-regard. All fluctuations in his luck turn on this money pivot as one very average Irishman's very average humanity is left gasping in the streets, on the stairs, in offices, in elevators, because it isn't quite in him to make it to where the dollars flow, keeping pretensions afloat. But dollars, mind you. For if Ginger is the poor fish of this metaphor, he isn't down where the stream narrows, as a pal of his who has been there tells him, to "a dime and a dime and a dime", and the pretensions to none at all.

Yet the superior force in Moore's arrangement stems not from this hard-headed appraisal of Montreal but from the over-riding counterforce of his sym-

pathy. Moore's hard head lets us know the discrepancy between Ginger's pretensions that he is a fine figure of a man and the foolish part he usually plays. But his sympathy lets us know that those very motions of foolishness move in Ginger from deeper than foolish levels of being which bring into play dignities of loyalty, of self-regard, of courage, even along the downgoing path he follows. His career is like a poorly managed, much thumbed, much abused text in which we can nevertheless read our own similar humanity. As his luck goes down the humanity comes up. The nearer he gets to the bottom (among the *Tribune* proof readers), the closer he comes to recognisably humane responses. And it is when he is most cruelly humiliated, in court, that his wife finally responds with direct concern for him rather than for appearances. But this doesn't happen often or help much. Ginger is too soft-headed, Montreal too hard-surfaced for a fair fight. *Mea culpa*, he cries out finally, *Mea culpa*, and another good Irishman is down the drain.

Moore handles his arrangements with great finesse. One senses that each detail, speech and incident has been played back enough times to satisfy a scrupulous sensibility. Incidents are smoothly joined, speeches ring right, details are sharply focused—to a fault, I think. Yet who would want to quarrel with that, since *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* contains a force of sympathy unusual in our pinched times when the quality of mercy is not so much strained as organised. Shakespeare knew better. It droppeth as the gentle rain. But that is what Ginger Coffey wanted to believe. And he was wrong.

WARREN TALLMAN

UNE POESIE NON FIGURATIVE

DIANE PELLETIER SPIECKER: *Les affres du zeste*. MICHELE DROUIN: *La duègne accroupie*. KLINE SAINTE-MARIE: *Les poèmes de la sommeillante*. JEAN-PAUL MARTINO: *Objets de la nuit*. Editions Quartz. Montréal.

ALMA DE CHANTAL: *L'étrange saison*. Editions Beauchemin, Montréal. \$1.50.

LA POESIE CONTEMPORAINE du Canada Français est jeune et audacieuse. Je n'en veux pour preuve que ces recueils qui me sont parvenus tout récemment. Dans quel autre genre que la poésie pourrait-on trouver des tentatives d'expression originale aussi nombreuses? En comparaison, le roman, bien qu'il soit pratiqué par un nombre considérable d'écrivains,

ne semble tenter que des talents conservateurs, tout heureux de pouvoir traiter des sujets canadiens par des procédés romanesques traditionnels.

Quatre des cinq recueils procèdent d'une conception de la poésie que la critique n'est pas unanime à accepter. Pour quatre de nos poètes, la poésie n'obéit à aucune règle précise de versification ou de rythmique. La forme n'est pas rejetée pour autant. Plutôt cette forme est affaire de goût personnel. Chacun des quatre poètes en question y arrive à sa façon. Voyons ce que donne cette liberté conditionnée.

Le plus réussi des cinq recueils me paraît être *Les affres du zeste* de Diane Pelletier Spiecker. Poète plein d'idées et de recherches verbales, Diane Pelletier, à l'encontre de tant d'autres qui courent

Arthur Meighen

VOLUME I: THE DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY

Roger Graham, B.A., M.A., PH.D.

"Well, Borden has found himself a man," was the comment of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, then Prime Minister, after hearing Arthur Meighen's first major speech. The young Member for Portage La Prairie went on to lead the Conservative Party and become at 46 the youngest Prime Minister in the British Empire and in Canada's history.

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Clarke Irwin

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vers un prévisible échec, gagne son pari. Sa poésie, pour être expérimentale, n'en reste pas moins structurée. Une certaine unité de ton se fait sentir du premier poème jusqu'au dernier. Voici *Laves*:

Forteresse vaincue du chaume de nos nuits
n'y aura-t-il que violence excrétée du
ventre-feu
qu'innocence reprochée sur ma paupière
saine
qui vaincra la solitude multiple de nos
jours
que j'immole l'holocauste sanglant
aux dunes ensablées de ces chauds désirs
et qu'à l'ivresse du temple esprit
ma voix languisse
et acrobate vers une lourdeur somnolente.

Ce langage n'est pas si télégraphique qu'il ne se laisse saisir, au moins dans un sens large. Le procédé qui consiste à donner aux substantifs une qualité verbale (ici *acrobate*) et dont Diane Pelletier fait un généreux usage, a le mérite d'une relative clarté. Dans l'ensemble, ces poèmes sont d'une écriture ferme, suggestive—et poétique.

Alors que l'attrait de la poésie de Diane Pelletier se fait sentir par un art elliptique et ordonné, celui de Michèle Drouin, résolument expérimental aussi, passe par l'incantation et le mot rare. Les pulsations se rapprochent parfois du rythme poétique tel que nous l'entendons d'habitude; certains vocables, bien placés, articulent la pensée:

L'œil a déployé sa robe et s'étonne
aux mines alizarines de l'amour
où rampent les intermittences de mes
paroles en ténèbres

je plains celle qui fut ouverte mais
non habitée
raide sur la chaise elle enfonce en
courroux ses paumes dans le temps

porte d'ébène qui s'ouvre et se ferme

rien qui ne vienne dehors la nuit dans
l'eau de pluie décuple la rumeur des
mâles ferveurs et délaie la songerie dans
une cage d'ovaires

l'on habite loin de chez-elle.

Jean-Paul Martino appartient à cette nombreuse génération de poètes qui, tant au Canada qu'ailleurs, évoque l'ennui de vivre. Dans une première page de prose poétisée, ce leitmotiv apparaît dès les premières lignes:

Les heures et les jours passent . . . Résumer la dominance des éléments, le voyage étrange des choses, les corps silencieux n'illuminant même plus les refuges, le verbe chair enseveli, la nuit universelle, les cris déchirants proférés, les signes de paix qui s'annulent; enfin tout ce flot de réalité tellement écroulant, qu'il me répugne de l'accompagner.

Lorsque, dans *L'appel du coucou*, Martino crée un paysage en demi-teintes, sa poésie atteint une immédiateté indiscutable, qui fait de ce poème une œuvre très réussie:

A la berge les enfants en maillots courts
S'amuse dans les quenouilles et les
grenouilles
Par cris étonnés ils insinuent la frayeur
Ce n'est qu'un signal respectueux
Pour les choses fragiles qu'ils vont
troubler
Soudain dans le temps bleu et le murmure
Ils entendent l'appel du coucou

Il semble s'agir dans les *Poèmes de la sommeillante* de Kline Sainte-Marie d'un état d'âme qui permet d'apercevoir certaines vérités refusées au commun des mortels. Non précisément à la manière des surréalistes, car la poésie de Kline Sainte-Marie ce poursuit sur un rythme large et continu:

l'amant aime la fille aux yeux aveugles
car le mystère est cécité
et projection d'antennes vers une seconde
lueur

eux deux soumettent au cycle
l'onde du geste continu vers la mort
l'invocation incante
la syllabe divine du rien
l'endort l'amenuise la guérit

Enfin, les *Poèmes pour l'haggadah et le passage* emprunte à la psychologie juive un ton à la fois plaintif et riche de suggestions ancestrales. Les différentes solutions techniques que renferment ces quelque trente pages annoncent un talent qui apporte à la poésie canadienne-française contemporaine une gamme de sensations inédite.

Alma de Chantal, dans un très mince recueil où percent le regret de vieillir et sa tristesse désabusée devant le monde moderne, trouve des accents sincères pour décrire son *Etrange saison*:

Qu'importe
Au jardin clos
Les fleurs dolentes
Les saisons mortes

Qu'importe
À ceux qui s'aiment
Les visages d'errance
Les solitudes lancinantes

Sous les paupières prisonnières
Un goût de vent de mer palpite
Dans l'âme étrange des vivants
l'espoir toujours renaît

Mais nul ne sait comment.

Voici donc un échantillonnage de la poésie qui se fait actuellement au Canada Français. Quatre sur cinq des ces recueils appartiennent à l'art non figuratif—pour emprunter à Malraux sa terminologie concernant l'art moderne. C'est dire que les poètes canadiens-français sont à l'avant-garde des écrivains de leur pays et que leurs expériences, déjà fructueuses,

constituent un exemple pour leurs confrères plus timorés.

GERARD TOUGAS

CHRONICLE OF TRANSITION

BERE JOSEPH GINSBURG. *Generation Passeth*
. . . . *Generation Cometh*. Ryerson Press.
\$4.50.

THOUGH *Generation Passeth* . . . *Generation Cometh* centres on the hero, Motl Grossman, the author establishes the theme indicated by the title in the opening section of the novel, by extending the events back in time through two earlier generations. The repetition of situations serves the author's purpose, emphasizing the inevitability of change and the tensions it generates, and at the same time indicating the limits imposed on change by a traditionalist society. A department store in an eastern European town is the unifying element in the story, but the author fails to make of it a force poetic or dramatic enough to seize on our imagination. The crises in the history of the Store, on which the author dwells at length—the modernizing of the store's facade or later the introduction of a ladies' section or of a ready-to-wear department—not only fail to move us, they fail even to be mildly interesting. The stature of the characters and the significance of the events are diminished by this emphasis.

Despite many knowledgeable and affectionate references to Jewish religious ceremonies and folkways, *Generation Passeth* . . . *Generation Cometh* lacks authen-

ticity. The background of events is too generalized. There are too few events or scenes that depict clearly the characters in the story or the distinctive aspects of their society. When, however, the author sufficiently forgets his broad theme of change and continuity, to which many of his episodes are clearly subordinated, and concentrates on his hero's inner crisis, which develops first as Motl is torn between the safe and worthy pattern of traditional life represented by the Store and the exciting altruism of the social reformers, and later between the ideal of service to which the self had to be sacrificed and his own needs as an individual human being, the story not only becomes dramatic, but takes on fuller meaning, reflecting in the individual the general crisis in European Jewish life in a time of transition.

The novel is weakened by the author's tendency to present most of his characters as stereotypes, while his moral earnestness and sympathy often trap him into oversimplification. Even more serious is the fact that the characters are presented from the outside: the author is inclined to tell us about them, to report rather than present their actions and sayings. Moreover, his prose is almost devoid of verbal energy or subtlety; stock epithets, trite images and flat abstractions frequently contribute to Ginsburg's failure to project characters, scenes and episodes with clarity and force.

Generation Passeth . . . Generation Cometh is presumably a first novel and as such it is a brave effort, especially when one considers the scope of the author's endeavours, but it is not a highly successful one.

M. W. STEINBERG

VARIETIES OF WASTE

PAMELA FRY. *The Watching Cat*. British Book Service. \$3.50.

MARIAN KEITH. *The Grand Lady*. McClelland & Stewart. \$4.50.

THOMAS H. RADDALL. *The Governor's Lady*. Doubleday. \$4.95.

THE CURSE of reviewing bad books is the temptation to say ill-tempered things which would do no good at all. The trouble is that one's life, during the time the books are being read and contemplated, narrows and becomes filled with insensitivity and importunity. The mind sucks in tens and hundreds of pages of waste and then regurgitates.

One fact unites the three books I am now reviewing; in all their nine hundred odd pages there is not a phrase, not a word deployed with more grace than copybook grammar, with more sensibility than mere continuity. Yet there is much good material mis-used in these books.

Pamela Fry's *The Watching Cat* could have been a vision of evil and specific sin, an entertainment with meaning if not true significance. As it stands, however, it needs only to be shorn of a chapterful of sex and a character full of heroin to become Number 47 in the Nancy Drew series. It has a young lady "detective", a mystery house, a wicked uncle, an evil housekeeper-wife, a shady lawyer, a jazz-talking (*sic*) villain and a handsome hero. The object of the hunt is Uncle's money and they find it, and true love, by screwing off the top of the newel post.

Marian Keith's *The Grand Lady* is a waste in another way; it is merely a col-

lection of notes strung together by cosy-coy observations on life in the good-old-days in rural Ontario. It has no story; it has only incident. Its saving grace is that it is so sketchily done that it seems not to be done at all. Aunt Flora, the grand old lady, deserves better treatment, and maybe someone will give it to her in a better book that will make everyone's Aunt Flora come to life.

Raddall's *The Governor's Lady* is not a waste so much as a shame. It is the winner of Doubleday's \$10,000 award for Canadian fiction. The novel would probably have earned Raddall his ten thousand from the torn bodice crowd anyway. The shame is that it should be given a literary prize. It is not literature, and those who care will grieve; those who don't will be misled. Let's be honest;

The Governor's Lady was given the prize because it fitted a formula and would pay back the publisher his money. It was given the prize because that was the safe thing to do.

The book is history. It deals with the American Revolution from the Loyalist point of view. The story is of Governor Johnnie Wentworth, who was His Majesty's Representative in New Hampshire when Sam Adams and his gang began throwing tea in the harbour at Boston. Johnnie is a hard-working man, incredibly naive, with only one thought: New Hampshire would be the greatest of the King's American provinces. He governs well if not wisely and there are pages upon dreary pages telling the reader of his common touch and of the huzzahs he hears on all sides as he walks down any

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street. Comes the revolution and he is left with only his loyalty—poor clothing in such a harsh climate.

In the meantime, however, he is bedded by an admiring and ambitious wench who gets pregnant by him while her husband lies home dying of galloping consumption. ("Just a minute while I loosen my stays.") From the beginning of their musket-marriage she is at odds with convention, and she spends a good deal of her time being influenced into bed by men of influence. Some of this slap and tickle is for fun, but a lot of it is for dull Johnnie who refuses to believe the war will not be won and who needs a new posting now that there are thirteen fewer Colonial Governors. In the end, after weary years in Nova Scotia, where Johnnie is Surveyor of the King's Woods, she reaches the pinnacle of her career by entertaining Prince William royally on his frequent visits to Halifax. It is the Prince who finally makes Governor Johnnie a Governor again, and on the last page of the book he returns triumphant from England, his little whore on his arm, cuckoldry and debt behind him, the ladies and gentlemen of the colony bowing and curtsying as he makes his gaudy way up the hill to the governor's mansion.

Those are some of the bones of the story. The flesh is American and British history, and Mr. Raddall knows a good deal about both. He seldom leaves out a fact. And because of this his characters have no real life of their own. They spend their time bowing to events. The only time the novel comes alive is when Prince William is around. Here, Raddall seems to have found for a moment a person he can love and laugh at, sympathize with and understand.

The novel lacks sensibility, sensitivity, a feeling for language. It builds walls of wooden narrative and plaster dialogue around the reader. It fails as a novel because it fails as the work literature should be doing. It fails to create a memorable character, it fails to open up a vista, it fails to illuminate an era. It began by wanting to do all these things. It ends by leaving the reader with only a sad memory of an author who couldn't quite cope.

ROBERT HARLOW

NELSON'S TELESCOPE

Northern Lights, edited by George E. Nelson.
Doubleday. \$4.95.

IN 1958 Messrs. Doubleday published *Cavalcade of the North*, which they described on the title-page as an "Entertaining Collection of Distinguished Writing by Canadian Authors . . . Selected by George E. Nelson." The collection included Hugh MacLennan's *Barometer Rising* and Mazo de la Roche's *Jalna* in their entirety, stories by Stephen Leacock, Morley Callaghan, Ethel Wilson, Sir Gilbert Parker, W. O. Mitchell, W. G. Hardy, Hugh Garner and others; extracts from books by Bruce Hutchison, Lionel Shapiro and Gabrielle Roy; and an exhortation from no less a celebrity than Lord Beaverbrook. The names are, in general, those that one would expect to see in a compilation of this sort, though to be sure there are some surprising omissions, and the collection itself, while unexciting, probably reflects the taste of the average Canadian reader.

The response was evidently encourag-

ing enough for Doubleday's to set Mr. Nelson to work once more, and we are now offered *Northern Lights*, a second "Collection of Distinguished Writing by Canadian Authors", though this one, unlike its predecessor, does not promise to be Entertaining, with a capital E. Quantitatively it outstrips the earlier book, offering three complete novels instead of two: 727 pages against 637; but the quality of its contents is even more variable.

I won't be rude about the titles of these anthologies, because the task of picking a name that would describe them accurately is one to tax far abler minds than mine; but I must register a slight wince at *Northern Lights*. However, Mr. Nelson starts off well by offering us Adele

Wiseman's *The Sacrifice* and *Judith Hearn* by Brian Moore: two novels that surely deserve their place in any representative collection of contemporary Canadian literature. The third novel, a "whodunit" by Frances Shelley Wees, is as bad a detective novel as I have ever read.

Some of the other selections in the book lead one to suppose that Mr. Nelson proceeds, like the eponymous naval hero, by clapping the wrong end of his telescope to a sightless eye. How else explain the inclusion of an article by Dr. Marion Hilliard in a collection of "distinguished Canadian writing"? In the pages of a ladies' magazine the breezy commonsense of Dr. Hilliard commanded a wide audience, and I am sure her

AN ANTHOLOGY

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popularity was well-merited, but I cannot see that the reader in search of "distinguished writing" is much better off for being told that "quite a few high-school boys have evolved zany methods that they are certain will prevent pregnancy". Nor can much originality be claimed for the statement, with which few will wish to quarrel, that "a growing boy must learn to discipline his sex-drive".

After finding Lord Beaverbrook resting coyly on Olympus in the first of Mr. Nelson's harvests, it comes as no surprise to find Lady Eaton represented in *Northern Lights* by a piece called "Integrity", which reads like a "prestige" advertisement for the well-known chain of stores serving us, the people. There is this difference between the Lord and the Lady, however: while the Beaverbrook admonition to the young to invest their time wisely in reading Good Books sounds uncannily like an echo of Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, on a ground-bass of Samuel Smiles, Lady Eaton from time to time strikes a note that is indistinguishable from the stirring philosophy of Shagpoke Whipple.

Miss Mazo de la Roche in her gossipy little introduction has this to say: "After scanning the table of contents I find that I have not read many of these stories. However, this does not much matter, as the names of the authors are assurance enough of the interest of what they write." I think Miss de la Roche's approach to literature must be as infectious as her evident gaiety: it has clearly spread to Mr. Nelson, who in his haste to get the "right" names in, appears to be satisfied with some indifferent performances by writers whose reputations rest on better

work than that which represents them in this anthology.

There is this to be said, however, in favour of this collection: it represents good value for \$4.95, since the novels by Brian Moore and Adele Wiseman would cost more than that if purchased separately; it would make a splendid Christmas present for the relations to whom you usually send a year's subscription to *Maclean's* or *Chatelaine*; it will go nicely on the shelf alongside your enviable collection of Reader's Digest Condensed Books.

But I must remember the wise words of Miss de la Roche about critics: "It is so easy to condemn. To condemn makes the critic appear clever. He is noticed where otherwise he might live or die unnoticed. Too often the critic is one who has been disappointed in his own efforts to make a name for himself in one of the creative arts. Sometimes he gives up the struggle and devotes his remaining energy to disparaging those who have succeeded." How true. To condemn the volume under discussion, though, must do less harm to a critic's reputation than to praise it.

Miss de la Roche ends her introduction (which I was unable, once started, to put down) by affirming: "No writing in Canada carries such influence as journalism. People who seldom or never read a book, read the newspapers. It seems to me that among those who contribute articles to the press, the Rabbi Abraham Feinberg stands out as the most eminent and eloquent." I look forward to sampling the Rabbi's work in Mr. Nelson's next collection, which might fittingly be entitled *Canadian Capers*.

TONY EMERY

FRENCH THOUGHTS ON LOWRY

Les lettres nouvelles 5. (Special Malcolm Lowry number). Julliard, Paris. 6.70 NF.

SOME YEARS AGO, in a CBC radio talk, I hazarded the view that Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* might well be the best novel so far written in Canada. Now, many Canadian novels later on my reading list, I would not be so tentative in my judgment; I have yet to meet its equal, and I suspect it may be long before I do. For *Under the Volcano* is a book whose originality of conception and power of language take it far out of any local context into the field of literature with a world significance. Yet Lowry's significance *was* local as well; as

he caught the essential feel of the Mexican plateau in *Under the Volcano*, so in some of his later stories he wrote of British Columbia with a lyrical perceptiveness rare even among Canadian writers born. Among his other virtues, he had the sense of place exceptionally developed.

For many Canadians, I suspect, Lowry was disconcerting; as a man and as a writer he did not compromise, and one has to accept him—as one should accept any artist—on his own highly individual terms. The effort is worth it, but it is an effort perhaps made more devotedly by foreign readers and critics than by ourselves, and so Lowry is quickly becoming a prophet outside the country in which, if he was not born, he did most of his best work. It is an American publishing house that has recently reprinted *Under*

GÉRARD TOUGAS

Associate Professor of French in the University of British Columbia

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the *Volcano*, and now from France, in the series of special numbers published by the Paris review *Les lettres nouvelles*, there appears a volume of more than two hundred pages devoted entirely to Lowry.

It includes appreciations of Lowry's work by such distinguished French critics as Maurice Nadeau and Max-Pol Fouchet. Both of them speak of Lowry in high terms. "Since Joyce, since the great Faulkners, nothing as important, nothing that goes farther or deeper has been offered to us by literature from abroad." Thus Fouchet speaks. And Nadeau points out how, in France, in England and in America, the admirers of *Under the Volcano* are a steadily growing company, as devoted as the admirers of Joyce and Proust at comparable stages in the development of their reputations. Clarisse Francillon recalls the Lowry she knew in Paris. Anton Myrer tells of the influence of Lowry on young American writers. Stéphen Spriel discusses the esoteric aspects of Lowry's symbolism, and Geneviève Bonnefoi tells of a pious journey to Cuernavaca in which she traced the parallels between the fictional and the actual worlds of the city that lies under the volcano. All these are extremely interesting articles for those who

wish more than a mere reading of *Under the Volcano*. They are reinforced by translations of poems and of two stories by Lowry, together with a group of letters mostly concerning the period when Lowry was writing *Under the Volcano*.

To find this volume in a Paris bookshop was a surprise and a pleasure. It would be an equal pleasure to see a serious critical study of Lowry appearing in Canada, and an even greater pleasure to welcome the publication of the novel, *October Ferry to Gabriola*, which was almost completed at the time of his death in 1957.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

LITERATURE OF HISTORY

ROBIN W. WINKS, *Recent Trends and New Literature in Canadian History*. American Historical Association, Washington.

THIS fifty-six page bibliographical essay by Professor Robin Winks of Yale University is published by the Service Center for Teachers of History of the American Historical Association, as part of a series of some two dozen pamphlets on various historical problems and periods designed for the assistance of high school teachers. Although the emphasis is on the work of the last two decades in Canadian studies, there is a brief outline of earlier developments which makes clear the rapidly rising rate of scholarly productivity. Periodical literature is not included except for a listing of some of the leading journals and reference to a few of the most outstanding historical articles which have appeared in their pages. If American high school teachers make extensive



use of this pamphlet one must conclude that the teaching of Canadian history south of the border has advanced well beyond the textbook approach still required by most Canadian Departments of Education.

Whatever high school teachers do with this survey, there are many others who should find Professor Winks' classifications and comments useful and provocative, including the alert undergraduate, the graduate student beginning to "organize his field", and the sceptical general reader who has always wondered whether there really are patterns and trends in Canadian historical studies.

A work of this sort is necessarily highly selective and any reader familiar with the subject will inevitably note the omission of some titles which he considers essential. This reader wonders why there is no mention of Everett C. Hughes' *French Canada in Transition* or J. G. Falardeau's *Essays on Contemporary Quebec*, although the paucity of books on recent developments in French Canada is lamented.

With the author's judgments about nearly all the titles cited and his assessment of the most urgently needed further studies there can be little quarrel. The latter category includes more first-rate biographies, further investigation of the relationships between Indian and white cultures, and greater attention to Canadian labour and business and to dominion-provincial relations. Canadian historians are rightly chastised for their tardiness in appropriating some of the tools of the social scientists and attention is called to the tendency of the "Imperial" and "Laurentian" schools of historians to underemphasize the Ameri-

can features of Canadian society.

It is remarkable that a pamphlet published under such respectable auspices failed to receive adequate attention from the proofreader and that several names are given incorrectly.

MARGARET PRANG

A FAMOUS EXPLORATION

SIMON FRASER. *Letters and Journals, 1806-1808*. Edited with an introduction by W. Kaye Lamb. Macmillan. \$5.00.

IN 1808 Simon Fraser made his famous exploration to the Pacific of British Columbia's main river. It is only now, 152 years later, that his *Letters and Journals* are presented to the public in anything like a complete or readable form. But there are historical reasons why Fraser's writing should not have received attention in the past. He reached the Pacific after both Mackenzie in Canada and Lewis and Clark in the United States, and the only immediate practical importance of his journey was negative; it proved that the river discovered by Mackenzie was not the Columbia, and that it was absolutely impossible as a route to and from the Pacific for the fur trade.

Yet the achievement was in itself extraordinary. Anyone who has seen the Fraser River in its canyons must find it hard to believe that any human being could have the hardihood to descend it deliberately in a birchbark canoe, or could have sufficient command over twenty-three other men to make them accompany him.

Fraser's account of his thousand-mile

journey to the sea and back is brief, a bare fifty-five foolscap pages in manuscript, sixty-seven pages in print. It has previously been available only in a mutilated form, in a book long out of print, yet it is surprising how often a number of its passages have been quoted. There are good reasons for this; no other writer had ever caught in words so much of the force of the river or the immensity of its chasm. The power of the description comes, not so much from diction or imagery, as from the sense of appropriate activity on the part of Fraser and his men—activity which in its turn is the key to Fraser's character:

Here the channel contracts to about forty yards, and is inclosed by two precipices of great heighth, which bending towards each other make it narrower above than below. It being absolutely impossible to carry the canoes by land, yet sooner than to abandon them, all hands without hesitation embarked, as it were *à corps perdu* upon the mercy of this Stygian tide. Once engaged the die was cast, and the great difficulty consisted in keeping the canoes in the medium, or *fil d'eau*, that is to say, clear of the precipice on one side, and of the gulphs formed by the waves on the other. However, thus skimming along like lightning, the crews cool and determined, followed each other in awful silence. And when we arrived at the end we stood gazing on our narrow escape from perdition. After breathing a little, we continued our course to a point where the Indians were encamped

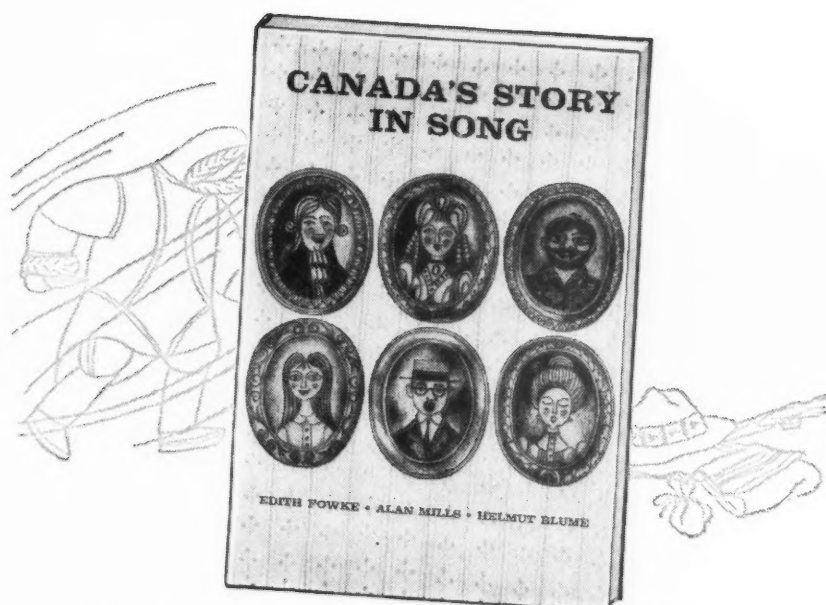
The editor of the *Letters and Journals*, Dr. W. Kaye Lamb, has broken the order of time in presenting Fraser's papers, and placed the journals and letters of 1806-07 after the journals of the main voyage. The two years preparatory to the great exploration are second in excitement to the main event of the navigation of the unnavigable river, which has become a

key part of the legend of early British Columbia. Lamb's unchronological arrangement is therefore justified, but it is to be hoped that few readers will fail to go on to the delayed prologue. It is somewhat lacking in grace, but has both candour and detail.

On the one hand, Fraser's account of the labor of establishing a base on the headwaters of the Fraser enhances our admiration for his conduct of the expedition as a whole. On the other hand, his objective statement of the events of each day often plays hob with romantic illusions about the fur trade, and his 1806 journal gives some very frank glimpses of the human relations in an area new to the fur trade, where control over the Indians is just beginning to be established:

To prevent others [Beaver Indians] from coming for women, she was taken from him as well as his gun, blanket, axe, dog, bow, and arrows and etc. and he was sent off in that defenseless manner However he did not go without some reluctance and Mr. Stuart conducting him out of the house and down the hill with a kick. The woman cried most bitterly after his departure and we kept a strict watch over her that she may not escape and go after him.

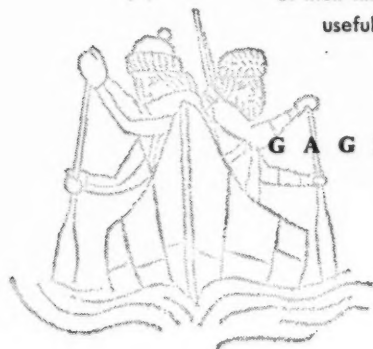
Dr. Lamb's treatment of the text has brought out the vigor of Fraser's writing and the pace of his adventures while preserving an authentic text. He has interpolated explanatory notes in square brackets into the literal text in a way that clears up difficulties of meaning and makes it read easily. Dr. Lamb has also written an introduction to the text which adds very substantially to our knowledge of Fraser's life and family. The volume as a whole is a work of real scholarship, but the apparatus of learning is concealed rather than paraded, which is as it should



Here is history set to music

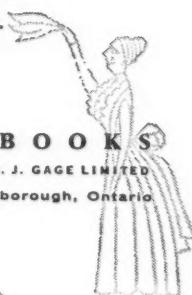
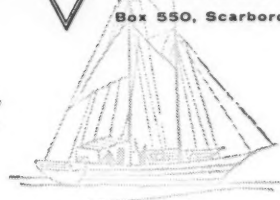
Canada's long and lively history has been
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be. It is Fraser who occupies the centre of the stage.

In 1802 the *Edinburgh Review* touched very shrewdly upon the power of Alexander Mackenzie's *Voyages* to compel the interest of the reader. "There is something", it said "in the idea of traversing a vast and unknown continent, that gives an agreeable expansion to our conceptions; and the imagination is insensibly engaged and inflamed by the spirit of adventure, and the perils and the novelties that are implied in a voyage of discovery." 1960 may be late to recognize the fact, but Fraser's journals are touched with that same power.

V. G. HOPWOOD

LIVING ON THE EDGE

GUY BLANCHET. *Search in the North*. Macmillan. \$5.00.

MARGARET SHARCOTT. *A Place of Many Winds*. British Book Service (Canada). \$5.00.

IT IS NOT by chance that these two books are bracketed together in one review, for they share at least one thing in common: each is a contribution to the literature of the Canadian frontier. With Guy Blanchet the reader may soar—usually in a one-motor and perhaps somewhat rickety plane of the 1920 vintage—to snow-bound outposts beyond the Arctic Circle; with Margaret Sharcott he may enter into the life of an isolated fishing village—Kyuquot—on one of Canada's most westerly shores, the outer coast of Vancouver Island.

Of the two books there is no question

which is the better—*Search in the North*. This is not just because its ingredients are naturally more exciting, but also because Mr. Blanchet is a better writer than Mrs. Sharcott. He has a better sense for the dramatic moment, he builds a better structure, and he has a richer, a more controlled, a more telling style.

Search in the North, described on the jacket as "the story of the first attempt at prospecting by aeroplane in the Arctic Barrens," opens in Halifax in July, 1928, and ends, eighteen months later, in December, 1929. Within these few months the author led a life of high adventure and endured severe hardships. He also acquired a deep admiration for those hardy north-dwellers, the Eskimos, and was obviously profoundly impressed by the awesome beauty of the land. For this book, written thirty years after the events it describes, is a warm recapturing of days long since gone; time's passing has little dulled the author's impressions, nor has it taken the edge off the sense of dramatic urgency felt especially in the closing portions of the story.

Nominally the account is concerned with a mining venture in the far north, backed by Colonel C. D. H. MacAlpine of Toronto and his associates. Actually Mr. Blanchet, who was in charge of the expedition that established an operational base at Tavani on the west coast of Hudson Bay, says little or nothing about mining as such. And at no time does he go into any of the technical aspects of the whole affair. He was apparently much more interested in the country and its peoples, and in the actions and reactions of men under the general stresses of the seasons, or when faced by the particular stresses encountered while travelling by

water, by land, and, most especially, by air.

Blanchet himself was not a pilot, but of the pilots who came to him in this far North he writes with admiration and affection, tempered on occasion by irritation and amazement at their actions. They were bush pilots all, and all flew by the seats of their pants. Over unchartered lands and through unbelievably hazardous weather they took their small, single engine planes, and trusted to luck as well as to skill for survival. True, they wrecked five planes, though loss of life there was none—either among the pilots or among those who flew with them. But most of them died violently later:

Vance crashed into Great Bear Lake in a misty landing; Andy was found in the wreckage of his plane among the rocky hills north of Great Slave Lake; Sutton caught a wing when flying too low over a lake. Broach, lighthearted, sometimes irresponsible but an outstanding pilot, was caught in a tailspin too close to the ground when testing a plane; and Bill, my companion in so many camps and flights, always unselfish and game, tried to fight his way through an Arctic storm once too often.

Such is the epilogue to *Search in the North*, a work written with modesty, sincerity, and authenticity. Though it deals with a small slice of time, it nevertheless makes a valuable contribution to the story of Canada's north.

Mrs. Sharcott's *A Place of Many Winds* stands in sharp contrast to *Search in the North*. In itself the book is not remarkable. But what is remarkable is the fact that the book was written at all. Mrs. Sharcott is the wife of a professional fisherman, who trolls the reef-studded Pacific waters on the west coast of Van-

couver Island. She is also the mother of two lively children and her days are filled with household duties. Though her formal education stopped at Grade Twelve, she early resolved to be a writer and the modest success already achieved is the result of her determination and courage. This is her second book and in it she continues the tranquil pattern set in *Troller's Holiday*, published a year or two ago. Basically she writes about what she knows best—her daily life in and around the isolated village, Kyuquot. From her we learn something of the lives of the coastal fishermen, of housing problems, of the passing of the seasons, of the bearing of children. Occasionally she ventures into the historical past, and gives some evidence of study and research. In her mild way she is writing

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her own *Measure of the Year*, but, alas, she is not a female Haig-Brown. Her materials, pleasant enough in a homey sort of a way, are lacking in depth and insight, and her style is still far from well-formed. True, it is plain and simple; but it lacks variety, richness, vigour, animation—in short, life.

Yet I wish her well, for I did sense in the latter part of this work a definite improvement, both in matter and manner. She is a woman of character and from her hard-earned typewriter may yet come writing of genuine merit, perhaps even distinction.

S. E. READ

BRIEF REVIEWS

Klondike Cattle Drive (Mitchell Press) is the journal written by the rancher Norman Lee when he tried to take a herd of two hundred cattle north from the Chilcotin plateau to the Yukon during the gold rush of 1898. Lee has been dead more than twenty years, and his journal was written more than sixty years ago, but now, published for the first time, it opens out with astonishing freshness.

Lee's venture was Quixotically impractical; bogged down on quagmire roads, with little feed, the cattle died or starved to walking skeletons, and the freezeup caught Lee before he could get the survivors down to Dawson City. He was left to make his way through the winter, and almost penniless into the bargain, from Telegraph Creek down to Vancouver at a time when no regular transport existed. With an appealingly rough irony he tells his story—the hardships, the disappoint-

ments, the dangers—and it all gains strength from being recounted by a man who never expected that his diary and its sharp little drawings would find the light of publication and reveal his odd and amiable personality to posterity.

* * *

ITS PUBLISHERS claim that *The True Face of Duplessis* by Pierre Laporte (Harvest House \$1.50) is "the first of the critical biographies" of Duplessis. Mr. Laporte's book is certainly critical, but equally certainly it is not a biography, since it does not even attempt to tell us the life of its subject. Rather it is a Character, a portrait of Duplessis as a personality, built up like a *pointilliste* painting by the accumulation of hundreds of anecdotes and fragmentary impressions. There is almost no chronological structure to the book, and little definiteness to the lines of the portrait, but an impression is indeed created in the mind, an impression of a rather Protean and shallow individual almost wholly uninteresting outside his political life. Perhaps that is all Duplessis was; perhaps that is all really professional politicians ever are. But Mr. Laporte's book would certainly have been more interesting to the reader from outside Quebec if it had been given at least some of the apparatus of real biography, and particularly a historical preface to fit the portrait more securely into the context of those political events among which alone Duplessis seems to have come alive as a man.

* * *

AT ITS 1960 meeting Section I of the Royal Society of Canada chose for its subject a study of Quebec between 1910

and 1935, the period during which, in the view of the conference's organisers, the influences that shaped modern Quebec were formed and matured. The discourses have been collected in a volume entitled *Aux Sources du Présent—The Roots of the Present* (University of Toronto Press, \$4.00). Three of them are of special interest to students of literature in Canada. In a very informative essay Léon Lortie explores "The English Contribution to Quebec's Cultural Life", while Jean Béraud reminisces interestingly on the drama in his "Souvenirs de théâtre, 1910-35". On the other hand, what might have been the most interesting subject of all, "Littérature, 1910-1935", is treated by Guy Sylvestre with disappointingly generalised brevity.

* * *

THE RE-ISSUE of *The Blasted Pine* in a paperback edition (Macmillan, \$1.75) is a welcome event. For those who do not already know this amusing volume, it is "an anthology of Satire, Invective and Disrespectful Verse" by Canadian writers (with one or two visitors from over the border or the Atlantic), selected by F. R. Scott and A. J. M. Smith, able satirists both. The editors perhaps go a little far in describing it as "a bomb to blast complacency". Rather, it is a fusillade of squibs; some of them are lively enough to make the heels of conformists skip with a merry clatter, but others are as damp as the dampest Canadian morning. In this, as in everything else literary, Canada seems to come of age in the present century, and so there is the same split evident here as in all other Cana-

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dian anthologies—some mightily heavy-handed stuff by our pioneers in satire (Standish O'Grady and Alex Glendinning and Judson France and so forth), and some sharp and rapid rapier work by such modern experts at thrust-rather-than-cut as Klein, Page, Reaney, Birney and the editors themselves.

INDIANS GOOD AND BAD

ETHEL BRANT MONTURE. *Famous Indians: Brant, Crowfoot, Orohyatekha*. Clarke Irwin. \$2.50.

JESSIE L. BEATTIE. *The Split in the Sky*. Ryerson Press. \$4.95.

SARA EATON. *Mocassin and Cross*. Copp Clark. \$2.95.

THREE recent books on Indians reverse the traditional and more interesting idea that the only good Indian is a dead one. But, lo, the poor Iroquois! Those in *Famous Indians* and *The Split in the Sky* are so sickeningly good that dead they are. Those in *Mocassin and Cross*, a novel for juveniles which centres on the Canadian martyrs, are so sketchily drawn at the climax, the massacre, that their badness is forgiven and forgotten.

This last book however does at least attempt to tell a credible and interesting story for young readers. Jean Amyot, a boy of twelve, goes to Huronia, where he meets such missionaries as Brébeuf, Lalemant and Jogues, and eventually grows to be a hunter, a scout, and the carpenter who plans a mission fort. On his arrival he becomes a "brother" of Tondakhra, also about twelve, and is given the Indian name Tawahon. The

boys' adventures over fifteen years lead the narrative to the martyrdom. Miss Eaton attempts to re-create the sense of helplessness, danger and futility in the missions, as well as to give some knowledge of the Indians and of Canadian history. But when March, 1649 arrives, and the Iroquois finally strike, the author, probably hyper-conscious of the over-publicised sensitivity of the present-day juvenile, hedges; she plays down the blood-curdling massacres which have been promised, and thereby betrays her readers. Yet, although the characters are generally flat and indistinct, the reader is aware of at least some variety among the Indians. Some are far from good.

In *Famous Indians*, on the other hand, the reader finds only good Indians: Brant, Crowfoot and Orohyatekha, better known as Dr. Peter Martin, the Canadian physician who established the Independent Order of Foresters in Canada, all emerge as paragons of virtue, as examples of how-to-be-good-Indians-even-though-live-ones. The short biographies are no doubt accurate, but the presentation suggests that until Canadian history is written with some style it will not be read.

The author of *Famous Indians* was born on the Indian reservation established by Joseph Brant, her great-great-grandfather, and is vaguely related also to Orohyatekha. She apparently had no blood ties with the Mocassin band of the Blackfoot tribe, but by including Crowfoot she makes her book partly western and more "Canadian". Perhaps because the author is not personally involved with him, Crowfoot is the most human among these portraits, but none of them will excite the imagination. Instead, imagination may merely be staggered by Brant's

well-composed deathbed utterance, by the dying Crowfoot's answer to "What is Life?", and by the sentimental doggerel found in Dr. Martin's pocket after his death.

The Brantford birthplace of one author is also the birthplace of the "integrated" Indian who visits his old home in *The Split in the Sky*. Alex Mason was born an Iroquois, but his father renounced Indian status and moved the family to Buffalo where the boy was raised in a conglomerate area and then educated at the university. When his father died and before going to a teaching job, Alex made a pilgrimage to Canada to see the land of his fathers, just as any red-blooded, crew-cut, white American might do. Over one summer, he was introduced to present-day Iroquois customs, political, social, religious and, romantically, marital.

The author of *The Split in the Sky* hopes that "the Great Spirit [will] guide us to a better understanding of our Indian brothers." They have the same emotions, the same sun and sky and earth, even though they treat them dif-

ferently; they use the same cars and electricity, send the same post cards, eat the same succotash: and certainly the Longhouse People are as religious as their Christian fellows. The author's idea is no doubt valid, but Alex Mason is the most thoughtful, the most mannerly, the most well-spoken, the most mealy-mouthed and the most wooden Indian ever to beset a page. This is fiction, a "story built upon fact". But no-one in fact could be so colourless as Alex Mason.

After reading these books one wonders what the poor Indian, and especially the poor Iroquois, has become. If one can judge from them, in the seventeenth century the Iroquois had some character, some individuality, all formed by hardship and wrapped in superstition; he ran hot and cold, like a human being. Over the next two centuries he became trusty, loyal, helpful, brotherly, courteous, kind — a Rotarian without gusto. Now he is an imitation paleface. How well-integrated he must feel as an anthropological, sociological, historical (and Canadian) subject!

GORDON R. ELLIOTT



ANTHOLOGY ON THE AIR

Chester Duncan

I THINK that many of the faithful who listen, perhaps often a little grimly, to the C.B.C. programme *Anthology* each week during its season would be agreeably surprised if they were to read the scripts they normally hear. Transmitted in this way, a great deal of the poetry and most of the critical pieces appear of higher quality than they do on the air. In the case of the short stories and extracts from novels it is more difficult to judge, because for some reason the aura of presentation is more likely in these cases to linger. It is the aura that hangs around university writers and the *idea* of Canadian arts. Although the reading of poetry on *Anthology* is often awkward, self-conscious, or simply absurd, and the critical articles are frequently rushed through as if the speaker were certain that his only audience could be deprecating colleagues, embarrassment evaporates more quickly than sham, and so one remembers such contributions with a certain affection. Also, one gets more quickly to what is being said in the material itself when it is not gilded with the tones of those who have a special accent for literature.

That this material rarely appears at

its best, of course, is due partly to the failure to realize consistently that *Anthology*, after all, is broadcast, and that articles, stories, and especially poems have to be very carefully considered in relation to their fitness for aural communication. I grant that sometimes we make too much fuss about what is or is not "good radio" or "good television", forgetting that quality itself has a will and a way through superficial difficulties, but in a country where the reading of poetry and good prose is infinitesimal in comparison with, say, the hearing of music, many mistakes of assumption can be made. Not that broadcast poetry need be empty or thin. It just has to be particularly good to hear, from its sound, or wit, or wisdom.

But it is not in individual items that the most interesting weakness of *Anthology* is to be found. These items are frequently first-rate, and, after all, this would be more than adequate justification for the programme's existence. Nevertheless, to seize on the quality and meaning of *Anthology* in relation to Canadian culture, one has to remember that it is a broadcast programme, that it is a kind of literary magazine with edi-

tors, and that, considering its emphasis and standards, it is bound to be regarded as "a good thing" by those who support Canadian arts.

It has always struck me as strange that *Anthology*, with no more serious purpose, should sound an altogether more forbidding note than *C.B.C. Wednesday Night*. Very experienced broadcasters and broadcasting executives have been associated with *Anthology*, but generally speaking they have not been able as yet to cut the knotted tensions or the heavy atmosphere of "the worthy effort". As *Anthology* moves around the country you can hear the local editors lisp their self-consciousness or echo the sepulchral dead-pan which was for so long the signal of its Toronto emanation. Despite *Anthology's* many good works, it has had, I think, an unfortunate broadcasting personality, a personality almost never enthusiastic, witty or relaxed.

Secondly, *Anthology* is not really an anthology but a weekly radio magazine, and I think its editors are forced by its half-hour length into a very difficult situation. You cannot really make a magazine out of one or two items unless it is a special edition, and the intensity of the main piece, if it happens to be good, may seem excessive unless it is heard in the company of more than one less intense smaller items. I think that one hour is the minimum time required if a proper and natural magazine tone is to be established. Even children's magazines on radio or television usually have an hour. Lately the material of *Anthology* has taken a good turn into interviews, essays and humorous writing. All that is now required is that the programme be allowed to breathe a little. As a listener

and hanger-on, I would appreciate hearing more radio editorial comment, news, and notes on current Canadian literary behaviour, and I think that the effect of the more "creative" items, heard in such a setting, would be greatly improved on the intellectual and historical level.

The third point I have to make will blot and spread to the others. It concerns the obstacle that sincere and idealistic Canadian lovers of the arts nearly always find too much for them when they wish to witness to their faith. Perhaps it is because so much of the semi-literary journalism in Canada is of such shoddy quality that people are inclined to think that there is a gulf between good journalism and "serious" writing, and that being readable and straightforward and gay is somehow a sign that one is too simple to be civilized. Thus Canadian magazines of artistic consequence, whether in print or on the air, have a tendency to gather to themselves a tone of self-righteous and pompous gravity, as if the business of the Canadian arts were too serious for any but the most verbally dexterous kind of frivolity. There is no denying the merit and even charm of many of the individual items in the *Tamarack Review* and in the C.B.C.'s *Music Diary*, to take two cases in point, but amid the encircling gloom of the editorial personality (not particularly lightened by an occasional determined humour) their sparkle is dimmed. Perhaps the secret is to stop thinking about the elevated importance of the arts, and to think of them more as a matter of course, our bread and butter. It is no use elevating literature if this means that you simply put it on the shelf, unread, unheard.

Anthology has certainly not been able to keep itself free from a certain air of literary piety, which, interestingly enough, would seem very old-fashioned in an approach to the performance of music, an art about which we Canadians are much less self-conscious. It is true, of course, that many serious writers in Canada are, in their social relations, pretentious bores or giggling or hissing hierophants, and it is difficult at times to keep this kind of disadvantage out of their occasional writing and broadcasting. So it is not always *Anthology's* fault that things go the way they do.

To speak critically of a programme usually means that more time is devoted to its faults than to its virtues. Besides, it's easier to do that. Yet it would be a serious mistake to leave the impression that *Anthology* has been only a brave try. It would be impractical to try to list the successes it has had in several years of life, but they have been many and definite. Most important of all is the fact of its steady offer of encouragement to those Canadian writers who have with integrity avoided the slick and commer-

cial, and its equally steady offer of encouragement to those listeners who have found, willingly or unwillingly, that they need these writers.

CANADIAN PLAY COMPETITION

Quite recently, the Canada Council awarded a grant of \$5,000 to the Manitoba Theatre Centre towards the production of a new play by a Canadian writer. We have not as yet decided exactly how we are going to select a suitable play, but it appears certain that it will be either by direct commission to a reputable Canadian writer or by means of a competition open to Canadians. It is our intention to award \$1,000 to the playwright, and also produce the play by the end of 1961.

My purpose in writing to you is to ask if you would be kind enough to invite interested writers to communicate with me at 500-232 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg 1, Man.

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